

23403706

BASEMENT

BS

2775

.B167

E96

1857

AN EXPOSITION,

ICAL, EXPLANATORY, AND PRACTICAL,

OF

EBREWS VI. 4-8:

WITH

REFERENCE LIKEWISE TO ISRAEL, AS A NATION, IN
CONNEXION WITH THIS PARTICULAR PASSAGE
OF SCRIPTURE.

BY

ROBERT BROWN.

LONDON :

JAMES NISBET & CO., BERNERS STREET.

1857.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY JOHN GREIG AND SON.

**DREW THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY.**

P R E F A C E.

THE following pages, (with the exception of the addresses at the end of the book), form a few isolated chapters of an unfinished work, which has engaged the writer's attention for some three or four years past. Being a professional man, and occupied in pursuits involving much mental labour, the prosecution of this work, after the fatigues of the day, obliging him, as it did, to search deeply into the blessed records of God's revealed will to man, has been to him a source of the sweetest pleasure and satisfaction. As it is possible, however, that the entire work may never be finished, and several portions of it are complete in themselves; being unwilling that the

whole of his labour should be lost, he now publishes the first portion in a separate form.

His grand object in writing the original work being, that it might, under God, be the means of leading souls to Christ, he trusts the Lord will accept this his offering, and bless it to this end ; for he well knows that " children are an heritage of the Lord : and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hands of a mighty man ; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them : they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate " (Psa. cxxvii. 3-5).

Should the Lord permit, other portions of the work will follow in due time.

BARTON-UPON-HUMBER,
15th December 1856.

AN EXPOSITION, &c.

“ For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance ; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God : but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing ; whose end is to be burned.”—HEB. vi. 4–8.

THIS passage has been variously interpreted by expositors ; some taking it in the very strictest sense, and thinking therein to see a proof that even a real child of God may ultimately fall away from God,

and be lost ; a statement which is flatly opposed to Scripture. Others again imagine that the chief force of the passage lies in the word "impossible," which they interpret "very difficult ;" and others again believe that it lies in the words "fall away," which, they say, signify "a total defection from God." We think, however, that this portion of God's word, like his entire word, is much more comprehensive, and cannot be restricted to either of these latter senses ; although it may, and no doubt does, comprehend them both. Consider, for a moment, the purpose for which it was written. We know God "has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth" (Ezek. xviii. 32, xxxiii. 11), and that he "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. ii. 4) ; and since God is infinite in knowledge, it is clear there existed *a strict necessity* for such an awful passage as this, or it never would have been written ; and it was no doubt intended as a *profitable* threatening, specially to prevent the Hebrews from relapsing into Judaism, and generally to prevent all the professing people of God from apostasy ; and as God "is longsuffering to us-ward," and "not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii. 9) ; and "he doth not afflict *willingly*, nor grieve the children of men" (Lam. iii. 33) ; and has made especial mention of backsliders in his word, and has given them some

very precious promises (Jer. iii. 14-22, Hos. xiv. 4, &c.) ; it was no doubt likewise written in general terms, in order that the unhappy backslider, who had a desire to return to God, might do so, and might have a peradventure of hope, even in the teeth of such a fearful word as this.

But to the consideration of the passage itself. And, first, as to the characters of the persons here spoken of. They "were once *enlightened*," ἀπαξ φωτισθέντας. We have the same word used in Eph. i. 18, from whence we gather that this enlightenment respects the heart as well as the understanding, "the eyes of your understanding (τῆς καρδίας* ὑμῶν, literally, of your *heart*) being enlightened (πεφωτισμένους)." It occurs again in Heb. x. 32, "But call to mind the former days in which, after ye were illuminated (φωτισθέντες), ye endured a great fight of afflictions ;" and in John i. 9, this illumination is expressly ascribed to Christ himself, who is called "the true light, which lighteth (φωτίζει) every man that cometh into the world ;" or, as many excellent scholars translate it, "the true light which, coming into the world, enlighteneth every man," *i. e.* was sent into the world for that purpose. The passage is, therefore, somewhat equivalent to that in the 10th chapter of this same

* The common reading is διανοίας (understanding), but it is generally supposed to have been a gloss. See Bloomfield, *in loc.*

Epistle, "after that we have *received the knowledge of the truth*" (ver. 26) ; and the enlightenment here spoken of seems to consist in the communication of spiritual knowledge to the understanding, by the spirit of Christ, *which MAY or MAY NOT influence the heart likewise*. Similarly we find St Paul's commission to the Gentiles was first "*to open their eyes ;*" and, secondly, "*to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins,*" &c. (Acts xxvi. 18). But it is clear that there were some, if not several amongst them, who had the eyes of their understanding opened, but whose hearts, nevertheless, were not "turned from darkness to light," &c. Thus we have a Balaam in the Old Testament, who is described as "the man whose eyes were open" (Num. xxiv. 3, 4, 15, 16), and who could so far see the blessedness of "the righteous," as to desire that he might "die" his "death," and that his "last end might be like his" (chap. xxiii. 10), but whose heart was still wholly unrenewed and unconverted, for "he" still "*loved the wages of unrighteousness*" (2 Pet. ii. 15), and "his end was according to his works" (2 Cor. xi. 15, *vide* Rev. ii. 14, Num. xxxi. 8, Josh. xiii. 22). And, again, we have a Simon Magus likewise, under the New Testament, who was similarly enlightened (Acts viii. 13), and similarly unconverted (ver. 18-24).

They "have tasted of the heavenly gift." "The heavenly gift." Some understand this of the special gift of the Holy Spirit, which is, in Acts viii. 20, called the "gift of God," the Holy Ghost being in Scripture often said to be "received," and being expressly called a "gift" in Acts ii. 38 and x. 45. This would, however, make the apostle mention this subject twice, and in two successive clauses; and, indeed, such expositors state that he does, interpreting *this* clause *the having experience* of the gift (chiefly the supernatural gift of the Spirit) *by possession*, and *the clause following, the knowing* the gift of the Spirit *by experience of his value*, &c. Others, again, think this phrase is equivalent to the one in chap. iii. 1, "partakers of the heavenly calling," the word "heavenly" being applied by some to the calling itself, as in its *nature* of a heavenly character, and by others to the *origin* of the calling, as being from heaven, and therefore from one in heaven, namely Christ, which accords more with our own view of the matter, although we see not why both these meanings should not be included in the phrase.

With regard to the passage before us, however, we are strongly inclined to think that it refers to Jesus Christ, who expressly styles himself the "gift of God" (John iv. 10), and "by" whom St Paul tells us came "the gift of grace," which is a Heb-

raism for "the gracious gift" (Rom. v. 15), or *unmerited gift* of his "righteousness" (*vide* ver. 17), "for he *gave* himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father. To whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen" (Gal. i. 4, 5). St Paul likewise calls him God's "unspeakable gift." "Thanks be unto God," says he, "for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. ix. 15).

And that passage in the 6th of John throws much light upon this subject. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth," said our Lord to the Jews, "but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall *give* unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye *believe* on him whom he hath sent. They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert, as it is written, He *gave* them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father *giveth* you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John vi. 27-33).

And the *tasting* mentioned in the passage under consideration, we think, implies a *very slight*, if not the slightest possible, acquaintance with the subject-matter of its experience, as the apostle intimates, when he says, "Therefore, leaving the *principles* of the doctrine of Christ, let *us* go on unto *perfection* ; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God," &c. (ver. 1). Hence the psalmist when he would urge the unconverted to make but trial of God's love, says, "O *taste* and see that the Lord is good ;" for says he, "*Blessed* is the man that *trusteth* in him" (Psa. xxxiv. 8). So likewise the Apostle Peter says of some young converts, "*If so be* ye have *tasted* that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. ii. 3) ; "if so be !" εἴπερ—if indeed ! a phrase implying the assumption of the supposition as true.

Tasting is, however, very different from *eating* and *drinking*. There may be a *tasting* to *reject* as here ; but it is *eating* and *drinking* which can *alone really nourish and benefit*. Hence our Lord in that same chapter of St John, where he speaks of himself as "the heavenly gift," also discourses largely upon the mode of becoming a participant in it. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that *believeth* on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the *bread* which *cometh down from heaven*, that a man may *eat* thereof, and

not die. I am the *living bread* which came down from heaven. *If any man EAT of this bread, he shall live for ever ;* and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John vi. 47-51). And again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, *Except ye EAT (not taste simply) the flesh of the Son of Man, and DRINK his blood, ye have NO life in you. Whoso EATETH my flesh, and DRINKETH my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that EATETH my flesh, and DRINKETH my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father ; so he that EATETH me, even he shall LIVE BY ME. This is that bread which came down from heaven : not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that EATETH of this bread shall LIVE FOR EVER*" (ver. 53-58).

Hence we see the real *eater* of the "bread from heaven"—the "heavenly gift"—is "faithful and beloved," and is a real "partaker of the benefit" (1 Tim. vi. 2). He *truly "believes in Christ"* (ver. 47), he "*lives by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him*" (Gal. ii. 20), he "*hath eternal life*" (ver. 54), and therefore "shall not come into condemnation ; but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24). But the *taster*—we mean the *mere taster and rejecter*—is in a fearfully different position, as we shall see.

We conceive this passage, therefore, to refer to the *taster*, who *may* subsequently become *an eater and drinker*, or who *may not*; in other words, to the second hearer in the parable of the sower,* a person who may “for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away” (Luke viii. 13), and *may* or *may not* be recovered; or to one who, though a genuine, is yet a very weak, unbelieving believer, so to speak, (1 Pet. ii. 3), and who may, through fear, or weakness, or unbelief, or persecution, fall away for a time, and be subsequently recovered, as we know such unhappy persons have been. (Compare Matt. xxvi. 69-75 and Mark xiv. 66-72, with John xxi 15-19; see also Acts xxvi. 10, 11, and compare 1 Cor. v. with 2 Cor. ii. 1-8.) And what should we think of that person who, after having tasted of the paschal lamb, was afterwards to reject it with abhorrence, or pass away from it with indifference? Should we not expect “that soul” to be utterly “cut off from his people?” and truly is not this the very person under consideration? But we are anticipating.

“And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.” There are two receptions of the Holy Ghost spoken of in Scripture; the one, respecting his regenerating and sanctifying grace, and the other, respecting his miraculous powers and gifts. The reception of the Holy Ghost as a regenerator and sanctifier, is

* This parable is considered at length in the original work.

never predicated in Scripture but of real believers. The reception of the Holy Ghost as a dispenser of miraculous powers and gifts ; that is, the reception from him of those powers and gifts, with the ability to exercise them, is predicated of believers, and illuminated unbelievers, indiscriminately.

Thus to speak to the first point ; it is said, " God according to his mercy, *saved us*, by the washing of *regeneration*, and *renewing of the Holy Ghost* ; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus iii. 5, 6). St Paul likewise thus addresses the believing Thessalonians, " Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For (*ὅτι*, because) our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and *in the Holy Ghost*, and in much assurance ; and ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (1 Thes. i. 4-6). " For the kingdom of God" (*i. e.* " within you," Luke xvii. 21), says he, addressing the Romans, " is *righteousness*, and peace, and joy *in the Holy Ghost*" (Rom. xiv. 17). For in them who are " justified by faith," and " have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1), " the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts *by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them*" (ver. 5). So that to be a " partaker of the Holy Ghost," in *this* sense, is to be a " partaker of the inheritance (Col. i. 12), of which the Holy Ghost is " the earnest"

(Eph. i. 14), or pledge (see also 2 Cor. i. 22, v. 5); it is to be a "partaker of God's holiness" (Heb. xii. 10); in fact, it is to be a "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Peter i. 4).

But to speak to the second point. The reception of the Holy Ghost is sometimes confined to the reception of his miraculous powers and gifts, which may be received by illuminated unbelievers, as well as by believers. Thus in the 8th chap. of the Acts of the Apostles, we are told that when the Samaritans "*believed* Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women," and "when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them *that they might receive the Holy Ghost*: (for as yet *he was fallen upon none of them*; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then laid they their hands on them, and *they received the Holy Ghost*" (Acts viii. 12, 14-17).

Again in the 10th chap., "While Peter spake these words, (to "Cornelius" and them "that were come together"), *the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word*. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was *poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost*. For they

heard them *speak with tongues, and magnify God,*" &c. (Acts x. 44-46). Again on another occasion, "Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" (ἀλλ' οὐδὲ εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιόν ἐστιν (δεδόμενον) ἠκούσαμεν, more correctly "we have not yet heard whether the Holy Ghost be" (given) *i.e.*, whether the time foretold by Joel had arrived, See Prof. Robinson's Lexicon). "And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, *the Holy Ghost came on them*; and they *spake with tongues, and prophesied*" (Acts xix. 1-6).

From all which examples it is evident that the reception of the Holy Ghost here spoken of is chiefly confined to the reception of his extraordinary powers and gifts. And it matters not whether these were believers or not (although it is by no means certain that they *all* were); for that *such a reception of the Holy Ghost* may be partaken of by

unbelievers, is clear from our Lord's own words, "By their *fruits*," says he, "ye shall know them. Not every one that *saieth* unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven ; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven. *Many* will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not *prophesied in thy name ? and in thy name have cast out devils ? and in thy name done many wonderful works ?* [none of which could ever have been effected by them but through the power of the Spirit of God, for no man can "even say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. xii. 3), much less *do* any "wonderful work" in his name, without such power ; and these works are elsewhere expressly ascribed to him in the passages above mentioned, as well as in other parts of Scripture, *vide* especially 1 Cor. xii. 7-11, 28 ; Gal. iii. 5 ; Eph. iv. 8-12 ; Acts ii. 4, 33 ; Heb. ii. 4, &c.] And then will I profess unto them, *I never knew you : depart from me, ye that work iniquity*" (Matt. vii. 21-23). "I NEVER *knew* YOU !" Now "*the Lord KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS*" (2 Tim. ii. 19). Consequently as he *never* knew these, it is clear *they never were his*, notwithstanding their miraculous powers and gifts, which were wrought through them by the power of the Spirit of God ; so that we see a man *may* receive *the Holy Ghost* in *this* sense, and yet after all be unconverted, and miss of heaven at last. (*Vide* also Num. xxiv. 4 ; John xi. 51 ; 1

Cor. xiii. 2, &c.) And albeit we have not *the miraculous gifts* of the Spirit now, yet we have *the ordinary gifts* of the Spirit still, which may be received in the same way. Oh, beware, sinner, how you trifle with any light or gift that comes from God. Think of that word "*many*," and of those fearful words, "*I never knew you ;*" and rest not now, until Christ be yours, and you be his.

"And have tasted the good word of God (*καὶ καλὸν γευσάμενους Θεοῦ ἔημα*) and the powers of the world to come." There are two phrases employed in Scripture to designate "the word of God." One is *ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ*, and the other is *ἔημα Θεοῦ*. The former is the more comprehensive, and the latter the more restricted phrase. The former generally signifies either the whole revealed word of God, as embodied in his *commands* to mankind ; or *the gospel in its entirety*. The latter generally denotes either *some particular command* of God ; or *the gospel in some special aspect*, so to speak, *of its character*. As examples of the former, we may note the following under the first division : "making the word of God (*τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ*) of none effect through your tradition" (Mark vii. 13) ; "my mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God (*τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ*), and do it" (Luke viii. 21, see chap. xi. 28) ; "if he called them gods unto whom the word of God (*ὁ λόγος τοῦ*

Θεοῦ) came," John x. 35 ; see also 1 Cor. xiv. 36 ; 1 Tim. iv. 5 ; Rev. i. 2, &c.).

As examples under the second division. It is said of Christ in Luke v. 1, that " the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God," (τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ), *i.e.* the gospel. So in a passage before quoted, " when the apostles which were at Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the word of God," (τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ) (Acts viii. 14), that is, had embraced the gospel. So in Acts xi. 1, it is said, " the apostles and brethren that were in Judea, heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God" (τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ). Again in Acts xiii. 44, we are told that " almost the whole city" of Antioch (ver. 14,) " came together to hear the word of God" (τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ), that is, the preaching of the gospel. And in ver. 7 of this same chapter, we learn that Sergius Paulus likewise " desired to hear the word of God" (τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ). The word λόγος likewise occurs in the following passages :— Luke viii. 11 ; John viii. 37 ; Acts iv. 4, 31 ; vi. 7 ; xiii. 46 ; xix. 20 ; Rom. ix. 6 ; 2 Cor. ii. 17 ; iv. 2 ; Col. i. 25 ; 1 Thess. ii. 13 ; 2 Tim. ii. 9 ; Titus ii. 5 ; Heb. iv. 12 ; xiii. 7 ; 1 Pet. i. 23 ; 1 John ii. 14 ; Rev. i. 9 ; vi. 9 ; xx. 4.

As examples of the latter phrase, in its primary meaning, we have " the word of God (ῥῆμα Θεοῦ) came unto John, the son of Zacharias in the wilderness" (Luke iii. 2), *i.e.* a special command or com-

mission came to him from God "to preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (ver. 3). So again in John iii. 34, John the Baptist says of our Lord, "he whom God hath sent, preacheth the words of God" (τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ Θεοῦ). And our Saviour himself says in John viii. 47 "he that is of God heareth God's words" (τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ Θεοῦ). So again the worlds are said to have been "framed by the word of God" (ῥήματι Θεοῦ) (Heb. xi. 3), *i.e.* by the mere fiat or command of God; according to that which is written, "he spake, and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast" (Psa. xxxiii. 9).

As examples under the second head we have, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God (ῥήματι Θεοῦ)" (Luke iv. 4); "the word (τό ῥῆμα) is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith (τὸ ῥῆμα τῆς πίστεως) which we preach" (Rom. x. 8); and so in ver. 17, alluding to the above, the Apostle says, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (ῥήματος Θεοῦ). And in Acts v. 20 we have the command given, "Go, stand and speak in the temple all the words of this life" (πάντα τὰ ῥήματα τῆς ζωῆς ταύτης). The word ῥῆμα occurs likewise in John vi. 63, 68; xv. 7; xvii. 8; Acts vi. 11, 13; x. 22, 37, 44; xi. 16; Eph. v. 26; vi. 17; Heb. i. 3; xii. 19; and 1 Peter i. 25, &c.*

* There are some exceptions to the above; as in Eph. vi. 17, compared with Heb. iv. 12, in the first of which passages

From the word ἐῖμα, therefore, having been employed in this passage instead of the word λόγος, and from its being further designated as “good” (*i.e. to the taster as tasting good*), and being coupled with “the powers of the world to come,” we apprehend “the good word of God” here does not refer to the gospel in its entirety, but to the gospel in some speciality, so to speak, of its character. “The good word of God,” we think, means here, therefore, the sweet and comforting portion of the gospel, as bringing glad tidings of good things; and refers to the promises of God in the gospel—the promises of heaven and eternal life, and everlasting blessedness, &c.—to gospel privileges, in fact, and gospel blessings; the word ἐῖμα having the signification of *promise* in Luke ii. 29; and this again coupled with the word *tasted*, which we have before considered, helps us further to understand the reason of the second hearer in the parable of the sower having received the word *with joy*, (λόγον being the word employed there

ἐῖμα is the word used, and in the second λόγος; but perhaps the meaning to be eliminated from the passages might be, that *the entire word* is a sword, and *every part of it*, so to speak, likewise. With this view, *vide* Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10, as examples of the use of this particular sword, and where likewise the word ἐῖμα is used. See also 1 Peter i. 23, 25, in the first of which verses λόγος is the word employed, and in the second ἐῖμα, *Vide* also Rev. xvii. 17, where the word λόγος is made use of; but here we think the word refers to *the entire revelation of God on the particular subject*, to which reference is made.

as denoting the gospel *generally*, because he was assumed to have actually embraced it, and reckoned indeed as a believer in it, Luke viii. 13, until the contrary was shewn to be the fact ; *vide* also Acts viii. 13, 23), because his mind was fixed, as it were, wholly upon God's *promises* to him in it, and *the blessings* consequent upon the reception of it, &c. ; and the reason likewise why he fell off, because he had not considered the obligation which the reception of the word thus laid upon him. He expected everything *from* God, but had no heart to do anything *for* God himself. Indeed this he had not considered, and so when "affliction arose for the word's sake," he was offended immediately (Mark iv. 17), and fell away at once. We have a good illustration of this character in the case of Pliable in the Pilgrim's Progress.

"The powers of the world to come." Man in his natural state is very little, if indeed at all, affected by *any* consideration of "the world to come." All his thoughts, his projects, his aspirations, and his hopes, respect "the world that now is" (2 Peter iii. 7) alone ; and he practically acts as if there would be none other. When, however, he begins to be convinced of sin by the Spirit of God, and more especially when he is in a measure illuminated by him, he begins to perceive that there is a "world to come," and he begins likewise to experience something of its awful reality, as well as its "powers"

upon his conscience. Now this feeling may be transient and momentary, and may, through the man's obstinacy and resistance, die away and be lost ; or it may be deep and settled, and may end in a fixed and abiding impression, which, under the teaching of God's Spirit, may lead to his saving conversion to God. It may be a tasting and rejecting, till its after powers are felt but to be a torment for ever ; or it may be a feeding and acting upon it in life as a mighty and all powerful truth, which will issue in everlasting felicity. (*Vide* Heb. xi. 8-10, 13-16, &c.)

. We have next to consider the conduct of the persons spoken of in this passage, and the effect of such conduct.

Their conduct. "If they shall fall away," καὶ παραπεσόντας :—"meaning," says Bloomfield, "those who have fallen away ;" a mild expression to signify *apostatizing*." The word παραπίπτω here employed is a compound word, and is derived from the verb πίπτω, to fall, and παρά, near, or near by. In composition, however, παρά frequently, as here, implies a swerving from the true point, a coming short of it, a going beyond it, like the English syllabic prefix *mis*,—*i. e.* wrongly, falsely ; and the compounded word signifies, to fall aside from, to swerve or deviate from any thing ; hence in the New Testament it signifies to fall away, *i. e.* from the path

of duty, from the faith, to apostatize. (*Vide* Professor Robinson's *Dic. in loc.*)

As this is the only place in the whole New Testament where the *verb* occurs, we have no parallel passages wherewith to compare it.* The compound *substantive* is however frequently met with; and the consideration of a passage or two wherein it occurs may perhaps tend to throw some light upon the one in question. It occurs among others in the following passages, "For if you forgive men their *trespasses*, (παραπτώματα), your heavenly Father will also forgive you," (Matt. vi. 14, so also, ver. 15, and see chap. xviii. 35, and Mark xi. 25, 26). "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a *fault* (παράπτωματι), ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness" (Gal. vi. 1). "Confess your *faults* (παραπτώματα) one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed," (James v. 16). "Who was delivered for our *offences* (παραπτώματα) and raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25, see also chap. v. 15-18, 20). "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? (πέσωσι) God forbid: but rather through their *fall* (παράπτωματι) salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy" (Rom. xi. 11, so ver. 12). "God was in Christ, reconciling the world

* The verb rendered by our translators "fall away" in Luke viii. 13, is ἀφίστημι, a different word altogether, though one of somewhat similar import.

unto himself, not imputing their *trespasses* (*παγαπώματα*) unto them" (2 Cor. v. 19, so also Eph. ii. 1). "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of *sins* (*παγαπτωμάτων*)" (Eph. i. 7, so also chap. ii. 5).

From a consideration of the above passages, it is clear, therefore, that the word *παγαπώμα* in Scripture, signifies any deviation from the path of rectitude, whether of greater or less extent ; and which may be consistent or inconsistent with a return to it. And we are strongly inclined to think that the *verb* from which the *substantive* is derived has a similar meaning. And if so, the passage before us might teach, that the persons spoken of might have fallen so far as not to be recovered, or they might not ; that is, that the falling away here spoken of was not *necessarily absolute*, although the word no doubt is capable of being so rendered. The context must, therefore, here decide in which sense the verb is to be understood, and the context hitherto, as we have seen, may be taken in *either* sense, *i. e.* has reference to *both* cases.

And what is the effect of their conduct ? "They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." These words, we think, are a further evidence that "the heavenly gift" refers to Christ, rather than to the Holy Spirit ; otherwise, we have nothing in the former description of the character prefigured, which is placed in

Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary Library

2965 Leonard St. NE

Grand Rapids, MI 49525

616-977-0599

opposition to this phrase ; but if it be understood in the sense in which we have endeavoured to explain it, the parallelism is then complete in both cases. Thus the "taster" of "the heavenly gift," turning rejecter, becomes the "crucifier to himself of the Son of God afresh ;" the "partaker of the Holy Ghost," and "taster of the powers of the world to come," turning resister, becomes "earth" unraided upon, "bearing thorns and briers," the natural product of his barren unproductive heart (ver. 8).

"They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh." It is said that "Christ *died for our sins*, according to the Scriptures," a doctrine which the apostle says, he "delivered unto" his converts "first of all," as being "that which he also received the first" (1 Cor. xv. 3, Gal. i. 11, 12, 15, 16), inasmuch as this is the very foundation-stone of the Christian religion (1 Cor. iii. 11, Eph. ii. 20, Luke xxiv. 46, 47, Acts xvii. 3, Gal. iii. 1, &c.) ; and he was the foundation-layer of the gospel church among the Gentiles (Rom. xv. 20, 1 Cor. iii. 10, and iv. 15, &c.). Hence, he says again, "he determined not to know anything among them, save Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2). Christ having therefore been crucified for our sins, sin was the procuring cause, so to speak, of his crucifixion, and it was by means of this death that he meant to destroy sin and its author. Thus, it is said in

Hebrews, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same ; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death (which is "the wages of sin," Rom. vi. 23), that is, the devil" (chap. ii. 14). And again in John, "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8) ; sin being his great and only work. Christ's object, therefore, being the destruction of sin, he who would be Christ's *must have* a like object, and if he *be* Christ's, he *will* have ; for if he be Christ's, he will be a partaker of Christ's spirit (Rom viii. 9, Gal. iv. 6, Phil. i. 19, &c.), and the Spirit is given for that express purpose (Rom. viii. 13). Hence, "they that are Christ's" are said to "have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24) ; they are "crucified unto the world" (Gal. vi. 14) ; they, "through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, that they may live" (Rom. viii. 13) ; "their old man being crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve sin" (Rom. vi. 6) ; "They are crucified with Christ, nevertheless they live ; yet not they, but Christ liveth in them ; and the life that they now live in the flesh, they live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them, and gave himself for them" (Gal. ii. 20). It follows, therefore, as a necessary consequence,

from these truths, that every wilful and deliberate sin committed by a professing Christian, is a "crucifying to himself of the Son of God afresh." It is a deliberate aiding and abetting of that which crucified Christ, and a giving up, therefore, necessarily of all interest in him. It is a selling oneself, as it were, to the devil, to work unrighteousness, and a siding with Satan, and fighting, under his accursed banners, against the blessed Jesus, who came to destroy the works of the devil ; if it does not comprehend in it also a tacit acquiescence in the justice of Christ's punishment, and that he deserved the death he died.

As, however, this was addressed to Hebrews, and a denial of Christ by Hebrews would be tantamount to a rejection of him as an impostor, this passage no doubt may mean more. It may mean that the persons so acting have a bitter and deadly hostility to Christ and his gospel, and so act, *ex animo* ; i. e. that so far as they themselves are concerned they would have crucified him, if not, would also re-crucify him, if they could.

"And put him to an open shame." Every wilful sin committed by a professing Christian in the open sight of others, is a putting of Christ to open shame, inasmuch as the act is a deliberate declaration *by him* that Christ's service is consistent with indulgence in sin—that he is not careful whether his disciples be holy or not, nay, that he is in

league with Beelzebub, and that he is "the minister of sin" himself (Gal. ii. 17). So St Paul argues in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, "Know ye not," says he, "that your bodies are the members of Christ, shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot?" a proposal from which he starts in horror with a "God forbid" (1 Cor. vi. 15). And so the prophet Nathan reasoned with David, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme (*i. e.* to assert that God permitted such sins and connived at them in his children, as we have ourselves heard it asserted by unbelievers), the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (2 Sam. xii. 14); aye, and "the sword shall never depart from thine house," &c. (ver. 10). Such sins are peculiarly aggravating to God, and must be punished accordingly. What! shall such men not be punished, because they are the professing people of God! Nay, surely this is the greater reason why they should be. Justice absolutely requires it. The vindication of the divine honour demands it. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos iii. 2). And yet, where the case is not hopeless, love is mixed with it even still. A father discovers that a dear son has committed some sad excesses in company with other boys. "As for those boys who have seduced my

poor boy," says he, "they are not mine, and I have nothing to do with them, but I will take care that *my* son does not go unpunished. I will not spare *him*." But why? to make him worse? Nay, surely, if possible, to make him better.

In the extended sense the phrase would no doubt apply to those who act with the avowed intent and object of vilifying and dishonouring Christ, and putting him to an open shame.

And what does the apostle predicate of the class of persons whom we have been considering? He says: "It is impossible to renew them unto repentance," and that for the reasons before given. "It is impossible (*ἀδύνατον*)." There are several senses of the word *ἀδύνατος* in Scripture, the ordinary meaning being deficient in strength or power; but the consideration of two of them only will be sufficient for our present purpose. The word signifies a thing absolutely impossible, *i. e.* a moral impossibility: as for instance in the 18th verse of this same chapter, where it is said that it is "impossible (*ἀδύνατον*) for God to lie;" his moral nature and perfections absolutely forbid it.

It signifies again a thing exceedingly difficult—impossible indeed, in the ordinary sense—to man, but possible with God. Thus in Mat. xix. 23–26, we are told, on a certain occasion, that "Jesus said unto his disciples, Verily, I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And again, I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." And "when his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, *With men*, THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE (*ἀδύνατον*); but *with God* ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE." (See also Mark x. 23-27; Luke xviii. 24-27). Now the word here may of course admit of *either* of these senses, according to the interpretation which is put upon the context; and we believe that it is used in *both* senses.

"To renew (*ἀνακατασκευάσειν*) them to repentance"—*ἀνακατασκευάω* signifies to rebuild decayed edifices—metaphorically, to restore to a former state; and as the apostle had before spoken of "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ," and "going on unto perfection; not *laying* AGAIN *the* FOUNDATION of *repentance* from dead works, and of *faith* toward God," &c. (ver. 1), he here asserts that in the event of this building being pulled down, or irreparably injured, (as in the instance before us), it would be utterly impossible in any case for *man* to rebuild or restore it. Now Scripture intimates that there are two buildings—one built up by nature, and another built up by grace. That which is of nature, man may rebuild or restore, if injured, but that which is of grace, he cannot. Thus this same apostle says, "If *I* build again the things which I

destroyed (the old building having been previously as it were, devoted to destruction as an incurably leprous house, Lev. xiv. 43-45) I make myself a transgressor" (Gal. ii. 18).

In a certain other passage likewise which we have before quoted, the apostle urges the "brethren, if a man be overtaken in a *fault*," (παράπτωματι), "to restore (καταρτίζετε) such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted" (Gal. vi. 1). Here καταρτίζω signifies literally to set right, metaphorically to restore; and the metaphor is taken from the resetting of a broken limb, "there being an allusion," says Bloomfield, "to the *erring member* of Christ's body, the Church." (See also 1 Cor. i. 10, &c.) Such a Παράπτωμα as this, therefore, we see that we can, under God, restore, as we are commanded to do so, but not such a Παράπτωμα as is mentioned in our text. This is wholly beyond our power. The case is utterly hopeless, so far indeed as man is concerned. This is a *rebuilding altogether*, and none but God can accomplish it. It is a case which is wholly beyond all ordinary means. The gospel, we know, is a sovereign remedy for all—but alas! we can tell this man nothing that he does not already know. Having grieved the Spirit of God he has left him to himself, and the truth falls powerless on a withered heart. No! we say, God must take this

man in hand, and deal with him himself, or he is gone for ever—he is a dead man to all eternity.*

The conclusion that we are inevitably compelled to draw, therefore, from an investigation of this portion of Scripture, and one which the judicious reader will no doubt have anticipated, is that the passage in question refers to two distinct classes of persons—the *really regenerate*, and the *illuminated unregenerate*. By the illuminated unregenerate it will be sufficiently clear, from what we have already advanced on this subject, that we understand those who have been so far enlightened by the Spirit of God, as to have discerned their danger on account of sin, and to have perceived the remedy proposed, but who have not yet accepted the proffered mercy and given up their hearts to God, and upon whose souls, therefore, no real saving change has passed. And further, that whenever unhappily a real child of God so far falls away from God as in any measure to come under the description of the persons here spoken of, as some, alas! no doubt have, (compare Matt. xxvi. 69-75, and Mark xiv. 66-72 with John xxi. 15-19. See also Acts xxvi. 10, 11, and com-

* The verb Ἀνακαίνιζω also occurs in 2 Cor. iv. 16, Col. iii. 10, &c., and the derivative substantive Ἀνακαίνωσις in Rom. xii. 2, Tit. iii. 5, &c. As a further illustration also of this sentence, *vide* also Psa. li. 7-12, especially ver. 8 and 10.

pare 1 Cor. v. with 2 Cor. ii. 1-8) ; yet however severely God may deal with him for his sin and folly, he will not utterly reject him and cast him off, but will ultimately renew him to repentance, and restore him again to his favour. The doctrine of election,* we think, clearly establishes this fact. Indeed, as it seems to us, the whole tenor of the entire word of God is adverse to any counter view of the subject. However *other relationships* to God may fail, *the relationship to God in Christ CAN NEVER FAIL*, (John i. 12, 13 ; Rom. viii. 14-17, 28-39 ; Gal. iv. 6, 7 ; Eph. i. 3-6 ; 1 John iii. 1, 2, &c. &c.) Saith the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament likewise, “ Incline your ear, and come unto me ; hear, and your soul shall live ; and I will make *an everlasting covenant* with you, even *the sure mercies of David*” (Isa. lv. 3). “ My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant *shall stand fast with him*. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments ; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments ; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.* **NEVERTHELESS MY LOVING-KINDNESS WILL I NOT UTTERLY TAKE FROM HIM, NOR SUFFER MY FAITHFULNESS TO FAIL. MY COVENANT WILL I NOT BREAK, nor alter the thing**

* This doctrine is illustrated and enforced in the original work.

that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven" (Psa lxxxix. 28-37). Saith our Lord Jesus also in the New, "*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*" (John vi. 37). "*And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day*" (ver. 39).

Furthermore, that when an illuminated unregenerate person so acts as to fall under the terms of this awful passage of Scripture, it seems exceedingly questionable whether he ever will be recovered again. It would, indeed, ill become us to dogmatise upon so fearful a subject, and we desire to speak with all becoming caution and moderation, but when we read in Scripture, that "if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, *through THE KNOWLEDGE of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, *THE LATTER END IS WORSE WITH THEM THAN THE BEGINNING. For it had been better for them not to have KNOWN the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them*" (2 Pet. ii. 20, 21), we may well fear that, "if we sin wilfully after that we

have received the KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law," we are told, "died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye," then, saith the apostle, "shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Heb. x. 26-29, *vide* also ver. 32). "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you," saith the apostle, addressing the Hebrews, "and things *that accompany salvation*, though we thus speak," as if it were doubtful whether such things *did* accompany salvation, although we know of course that they do; his meaning being, we believe, that they are such things as may exist *without* salvation, *i. e.*, that they are not therefore NECESSARILY connected with it.

And let it not be thought that the former view of the subject encourages licentiousness, (for if it be a scriptural view, as we sincerely believe it is, such an objection is untenable), or that the latter view generates despair in hopeful cases; for if we believe the clear testimony of Scripture, that none but those who exhibit in themselves the evidence of a renewed nature, can be accounted the children

of God, it must be clear that *no* person in the state contemplated by this passage of Scripture, *can be so considered by man* ; inasmuch as he exhibits in himself no scriptural evidence whatever of the fact, but the reverse. Neither could any man predict beforehand, that any particular individual, so acting, would with certainty be restored. It is clear God alone could foretell this. Therefore, the regenerate and illuminated unregenerate are here upon a level ; neither is it possible but for God in all cases to distinguish between them. On the other hand, this again affords some peradventure of hope to a miserable backslider, bowed down under the burden of his guilt : for, while there is life there is hope, and if the pulse of his spiritual life yet beats, it is an evidence that the Spirit of God has not yet ceased to strive with him, but that he may even yet be healed, and restored, and pardoned. But, oh, let not such an one delay one moment longer, or he is undone for ever.

Without straining Scripture too far, we have, we think, a clear and very forcible illustration of our subject, in the case of the despisers of the manna, which was a type of the true bread from heaven—the Lord Jesus Christ. We are told, that, on a certain occasion, “the mixed multitude that was among them *fell a lusting* ; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us *flesh* to eat ? We remember the fish which we did *eat in EGYPT*

freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick. *But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside THIS MANNA, before our eyes*" (Num. xi. 4-6).

The Apostle Paul, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, after instancing several remarkable circumstances which happened to the Israelites in the wilderness, adds as his inspired comment upon them: "Now these things were our examples (*τύποι*, literally *types*), to the intent we should not lust after *evil things* as they also lusted" (1 Cor. x. 6). And then alluding to the passage before us, and to a parallel one in Num. xxi. 5, 6, where "the people spake against God, . . . *our soul loatheth THIS LIGHT BREAD*," he adds: "neither let us tempt *Christ*, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents" (ver. 9); concluding again, "now all these things happened unto them for *en-samples* (margin *types*, *τύποι*); and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth," adds he, "take heed lest he fall" (ver. 11, 12), *i. e.* "after the same example of unbelief." (*Vide* Heb. iv. 11.)

The manna being therefore a type of Christ himself; and Egypt representing "this present evil world," from which Christ came to "deliver us" (Gal. i. 4); and its king, who at first holds even God's people in "bondage under the elements of the

world" (Gal. iv. 3), symbolizing "the prince," and "god of this world," Satan, (John xii. 31 ; xiv. 30 ; xvi. 11 ; Acts xxvi. 18 ; 2 Cor. iv. 4 ; Eph. ii. 2 ; vi. 12, &c.), whose allegiance the *true* Israelite has renounced, "not fearing the wrath of this king" of Egypt, but "enduring as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb xi. 27) ; it follows that these "lusters after evil things," and despisers of the "bread from heaven," who were *Israelites only in name and profession*,—(it being borne in mind that "he is not a *Jew*, which is one *outwardly*" (Rom. ii. 28), "but he is a *Jew* which is one *inwardly*, and circumcision is that of the *heart*" (ver. 29), and in their *hearts*, *these* were *Egyptians still* ; for "in their *hearts they turned back into Egypt*," and would indeed have turned and gone back also in their bodies, if they could. Acts vii. 39)—were apt representatives of the persons spoken of in this passage—the "backsliders in heart" under the Christian dispensation—the despisers and fallers away from Christ.

And the account of that which happened unto them is beautifully illustrative and instructive. We are told that "*the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly*" (v. 10) ; and he said unto Moses, "Say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and *ye shall eat FLESH* : for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, *Who shall give us FLESH to eat ? for it was WELL with us in EGYPT ; therefore THE LORD will give you FLESH, and ye shall*

eat. You shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; *but even a whole month*, UNTIL IT COME OUT AT YOUR NOSTRILS, AND IT BE LOATHSOME UNTO YOU : because that ye have *despised the Lord* which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, *Why came we forth out of Egypt ?*" (Ver. 18-20). "So they did eat, and were well filled : for he gave them their own desire ; they were not estranged from ('disappointed of,' prayer-book version) their lust." (Psa. lxxviii. 29, 30). "*He gave them their request* ('desire,' prayer-book version) ; but sent *leanness* into their soul" (Psa. cvi. 15). And oh ! how awful a judgment ! that the God who giveth "salvation" (Psa. lxviii. 19, 20, &c.), should be to the wilful and confirmed backslider, the God also who giveth damnation ! Have a care, O sinner ! how you trifle with God. Miserable backslider ! would you in your heart turn back again into Egypt, and desire to feed once more upon its fleshy dainties ? Beware ! Oh beware ! how you "rebel" and "vex" God's "Holy Spirit" lest he "turn to be your enemy," and "fight against you" (Isa. lxiii. 10) ; lest he say unto you in righteous indignation, "*Will you have your sin ?* O sinner ! Then you *shall* have it. You shall have it in perfection. You shall have it till it comes out of your soul's nostrils, and it be loathsome to you." "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him ; as he delighteth not in blessing, so let

it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually" (Psa. cix. 17-19). As he loved his sin, he shall have it ; aye, he shall have it *for ever* ! Let sin be an eternal law of death in his being ! "The backslider in heart shall be *filled* with his own ways" (Prov. xiv. 14).

And mark likewise the consequences of God's anger against these miserable apostates. "And *while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague.* And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah (that is, the graves of lust, margin) : because there they buried the people that lusted" (ver. 33, 34).

In the 78th Psalm we are told that God "slew the *fattest* of them, (prayer-book version, 'the *wealthiest* of them') and smote down the *chosen* (margin, 'young men') of Israel" (ver. 31). This clearly points out to us that they were the hardened, and impenitent chiefly, who were slain. But as it would have been impossible, in that case, to have told beforehand "whom God would have slain and whom he would have kept alive ;" so it is equally impossible, in the general, in the case of backsliders under the new

testament, to tell beforehand who may be restored, and who may be left to perish. Therefore beware ! O ! backslider, beware ! for if *thou* stand out a moment longer, *thou, even thou, may be the very man !*

And now let us notice the illustration which the apostle himself adduces of his subject. "For the *earth*," he says, "which *drinketh in the rain* that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet or them by whom (ἐν ᾧ τὸν ἐκείνοις δι' οὗς suitable for those on account of whom, Bloomfield) it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God." Here you observe he compares the converted heart,—which in another place he calls "God's *husbandry* (γεώργιον, his *tilled or cultivated field*, 1 Cor. iii. 9), the constant recipient of the grace of God's Holy Spirit,—to a well "dressed field," "drinking in the rain that cometh oft upon it," and under "the blessing of God," "bringing forth" fruit to perfection—a description of character clearly designated in the fourth hearer in the parable of the sower. And you will observe here that *this* earth is said to "*drink in the rain* that cometh oft upon it"—*not to taste it merely*, as the person alluded to in the text—a description of soul again answering to that of the psalmist :—"O God, thou art my God ; early will I seek thee : my soul THIRSTETH *for thee*, my flesh longeth for

thee in a dry and *thirsty land*, where no water is" (Psa. lxiii. i). "I stretch forth my hands unto thee : my soul *thirsteth after thee as a THIRSTY LAND*" (Psa. cxliii. 6) ; " DRINKING *in the rain that cometh oft upon it,*" (*Vide* also Psa. xlii. 2, and lxxxiv. 2, &c.). "But that which beareth thorns and briers," the apostle continues, "is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."

The same figure, you will observe, is here continued ; and the character here symbolized is clearly the same as that which is portrayed by our Lord in the third hearer in the parable of the sower. A consideration of that portion of the parable would clearly shew that some care and pains had been bestowed upon that field, and by consequence, of course also upon the hearer symbolized ; and so here, although it is not expressly *asserted*, yet it is clearly *implied*, from the previous description of the field which the Lord had blessed, that care and pains likewise had been bestowed upon this field, which was now nigh unto cursing ; and that some rain at least also had fallen upon *it*—we say *some*, because this field, as appears from the first portion of the passage, was but *a taster only*, and not *a drinker in* of the rain that fell upon it ; and no doubt at this time *no* rain was falling upon it, inasmuch as it was now utterly unfruitful, and of such a vineyard we are expressly told that the Lord "commands the clouds that they *rain no rain* upon it." We speak figuratively of course as

does indeed also the passage from which we quote (Isa. v. 6). "Thorns and briers" likewise naturally symbolize the fruits and consequence of sin—the natural product of the "cursed," unproductive ground.

Now the apostle affirms of this field, and, therefore, also of the person signified thereby, that it is "rejected" (ἀδόκιμος).

The word Ἀδόκιμος literally means *unapproved*, and is derived from the primitive particle α not, and δόκιμος *that which is receivable as having been tried*; and the primary reference is to metals as having undergone the proof by fire. Here it of course means *unfit for the purpose intended*—and as that was an agricultural purpose, it necessarily means *unfit for agricultural purposes, i. e. that the land was in reality good for nothing*. With regard to the thing signified, it would of course have an equivalent meaning, and might denote the person's *unfitness for the kingdom of heaven*, by reason of his incapability of bringing forth fruit to God's glory, as our Lord himself tells us in another place, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit (ἐὐθετός, the very same word which the apostle here uses) for the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 62).

The apostle says it is also "nigh unto cursing." Nigh!—ἐγγύς, near. Hence it is not yet absolutely

and irretrievably cursed (as those mentioned, 2 Peter ii. 14, 15, "*cursed* children; which have *forsaken the right way*, and are *gone astray*, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor"), but it is indeed so very near it, that it almost seems a question whether it will be cursed or not. The cursing here evidently, so far as respects the land, denotes a devotedness of it, as it were, by God to utter barrenness—as we see in the case of the fruitless fig-tree, "*No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever*" (Mark xi. 14); "*Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away*" (ver. 21; *vide* also Gen. iii. 17, 18, v. 29, viii. 21, &c.). And as respects the individual, it would undoubtedly have a similar signification; and in his case the curse would imply a complete missing, as it were, of the whole end of being—an eternal barrenness of soul towards God, and a consequent everlasting worthlessness, and devotedness to perpetual destruction.

"Whose end is to be burned." But whether cursed *absolutely*, or only "*nigh* unto cursing," the apostle tells us here most expressly, that his "*end is to be burned*." The allusion is no doubt to a practice, which was common among the Roman and oriental nations, of burning bad and barren lands, for the purpose, if possible, of rendering them good and fruitful, by setting fire to the produce of the

land as it stood in the field, and thus consuming it in the ground in which it grew.*

Pliny the elder alludes to the practice in his Natural History, book xviii. 30. Speaking of the *culmus* or stalk, he says: "*Sunt qui accendant in arvo et stipulas, magno Virgilii præconio. Summa autem ejus ratio, ut herbarum semen exurant.*" "There are those who *set fire to it in the field with the straw*, a practice which is highly commended by Virgil. The chief reason for this is, *that they may consume the seed of the weeds.*"†

The passage in Virgil to which Pliny refers, is no doubt the following passage from the Georgics:—

"Sæpe etiam steriles incendere profuit agros,
Atque levem stipulam crepitantibus urere flammis:
Sive inde occultas vires et pabula terræ
Pinguia concipiunt; sive illis omne per ignem
Excoquitur vitium, atque exsudat inutilis humor;
Seu plures calor ille vias et cæca relaxat
Spiramenta, novas veniat qua succus in herbas;
Seu durat magis, et venas astringit hiantes:
Ne tenues pluviae, rapidive potentia solis
Acrior, aut Boreæ penetrabile frigus adurat."

GEORG. i. 84-93.

"Often also has it been found useful *to set fire to barren lands*, and to burn the light straw in crack-

* This view of the passage the writer does not put forth as any novelty, as he is aware that it has been advocated before.

† C. Plinii Secundi Nat. Hist., lib. xviii. lxxii. (xxx.), Delphin Classics, Pliny, vol. 6, p. 2936.

ling flames : either because the earth acquires from thence a secret virtue and fruitful nourishment ; or because *every vicious element is extracted from it by the fire*, and the useless moisture exudes ; or because that heat opens out many ways and hidden air passages, through which moisture may come to the new grass ; or because it hardens the earth more, and contracts the opening pores : so that neither slight rains, nor the fiercer power of the burning sun, nor the penetrating cold of the north wind, may injure it.”*

From these passages we gather, that it was a custom in the Roman empire, of which Judea was, at the time the apostle wrote, a tributary province, to set fire to barren lands in the hope of amelio-

* “ Long practice has a sure improvement found,
With kindled fires to burn the barren ground ;
 When the light stubble, to the flames resign’d,
 Is driv’n along, and crackles in the wind.
 Whether from hence the hollow womb of earth
 Is warm’d with secret strength for better birth ;
 Or when *the latent vice is cur’d by fire*,
 Redundant humours thro’ the pores expire ;
 Or that the warmth distends the chinks, and makes
 New breathings, whence new nourishment she takes ;
 Or that the heat the gaping ground constrains,
 New knits the surface, and new strings the veins,
 Lest soaking show’rs should pierce her secret seat,
 Or freezing Boreas chill her genial heat ;
 Or scorching suns too violently beat.”

DRYDEN’S translation.

rating them, by extracting from out of them every vicious element which was supposed to have been one cause of their unfruitfulness ; of opening out new sources of strength and nutriment which lay dormant, as it were, until the fire evoked them ; and at the same time of destroying the seeds of the weeds, together with the weeds, also, which then grew upon the ground ; so that they might be effectually checked in their growth, if not entirely extirpated and eradicated. Now, if it be clear that the apostle alludes to this custom, which, we think (and the reader will no doubt from the context be fully disposed to agree with us) that it is ; and if it be clear also that some persons have been recovered from this fearful state of backsliding, as the Scriptures adduced have also shewn to be the fact ; then it will follow, as a matter of course, that the apostle alludes to the burning here spoken of, as a burning, certainly, *primarily* for the *improvement* of the land in question, and as a necessary consequence also for the improvement, or attempted improvement, of the lapsed soul symbolized by the figure.—And our next object of inquiry, therefore, must be, what is the spiritual import of this figure, as having reference to the persons here symbolized ?

Now, in Scripture, *fire* is used as an emblem of *wrath*—the wrath of God, fastening upon man, as it were, as a punishment, by reason of his obnoxiousness to God's justice on account of sin. Hence,

“ God ” is said to be “ a consuming fire ” (Heb. xii. 29). Again we read in Zephaniah, “ Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of *the Lord’s* WRATH ; but the whole land shall be *devoured by the FIRE of his jealousy* ” (chap. i. 18). And again in chap. iii., “ Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey : for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine *indignation*, even all my *fierce* ANGER : for all the earth shall be *devoured with the FIRE of my jealousy* ” (ver. 8 ; see also Jer. iv. 4, xxi. 12 ; Amos v. 6, &c.).

It is also used as an emblem of the *refining power of tribulation upon the soul*, when used for that end by the Holy Spirit of God. Thus “ the Lord ” Jesus, “ the messenger of the covenant,” is said to be “ like A REFINER’S FIRE, and like fuller’s soap ; and he shall sit as a *refiner* and *purifier* of silver ; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness ” (Mal. iii. 1, 3) ; for he it was, and he only, as John bare witness of him, who “ shall baptize you with *the Holy Ghost* and with *fire* ; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner ; but he will *burn up* the chaff with unquenchable fire ” (Mat. iii. 11, 12 ; see also Luke iii. 16¹ ; Isa. xxxi. 9 ; Zech. xiii. 9, &c.).

Now as this burning was intended for the spiritual improvement of the sinner, it would seem as if both these meanings were comprehended in the term *καὶνσις* (burning) here employed ; and we therefore take the spiritual import of the passage to be this. The burning of the barren field denoted the unfruitful sinner being given up for a time to the wrath of God, or to what the apostle calls, in another place, "the terror of the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 11), "the living God" into "whose hands," he says with especial reference to apostates, (Heb. x. 26-29), that "it is a fearful thing to fall" (ver. 31) : and his being given over likewise, possibly at the same time, to great outward afflictions, not indeed with a view to his destruction, but with a view of driving him, as it were, to "remember from whence he had fallen, and to repent and do the first works" (Rev. ii. 5) ; and to seek once more for grace and salvation, at the hands of that blessed Saviour whom he had so deeply pierced and wounded with his sins ; with a view in fact to the restoration and renewal of his soul.

It might comprehend in it likewise a being given up also, for a time, into the hands of Satan, to "be his servant, that he might know God's service, and the service of the kingdom of the country" of "Egypt," over which Satan reigns (2 Chron. xii. 8, 9). And who can tell the horrors of such a captivity, "for who knoweth the power of thine anger ?" (Psa. xc.

11)—a captivity more or less dreadful indeed, as God sees it fit to punish individual sinners for their atrocities, and in some proportion perhaps to their deserts, “for even thereafter as a man feareth, so is thy displeasure” (Psa. xc. 11, prayer-book version), and as they are able to bear it, (*vide* in proof 2 Cor. ii. 6-8).

And now how speedily do his blooming apples from the Dead Sea turn to ashes ; his “vine” being of “the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah,” his “grapes” have become “grapes of gall,” and his “clusters are bitter ;” his “wine” is transformed into “the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps” (Deut. xxxii. 32, 33) ; his serpent that he has nourished in his bosom stings him to the very soul ; and the memory of all his cherished and once attractive pleasures now gnaw him like a burning worm. “The arrows of the Almighty are within him, the poison whereof drinketh up his spirit : the terrors of God do set themselves in array against him” (Job vi. 4) ; “a dreadful sound is in his ears” (chap. xv. 21) ; and “he believeth not that he shall return out of darkness” (ver. 22). The wrath of God seizes upon his soul, black darkness settles down upon his spirit, his conscience is racked with aggravated and unpardoned guilt, and Satan is fearfully busy and active with him. Sleeping or waking, he seems to have no rest. “In the morning,” he says, “Would God it were even ! and

at even," the full tide of sickening horror still rolling in upon his spirit, he says "Would God it were morning!" (Deut. xxviii. 67.) If he say, "My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint;" then is he "scared" with "dreams and terrified through visions" (Job vii. 14). The sweet breath of heaven to him, is but suggestive of a blast from hell; the glancing of the sunbeam, is as the very flaming of the pit. In the voice of the thunder, he hears but his dread summons to the bar of God; and even in the eddies of the very dust, as it circles on before him, he sees but his own soul, as it were, swept away with the myriads of the wicked into destruction. Every drop of hope, or happiness, or joy, seems completely wrung out of creation; and there remains but for him a fearful, waste howling wilderness of sin and death, with the dread curse of an angry God above all, withering and blasting all before it. "Hell from beneath" seems "moving to meet him at his coming" (Isa. xiv. 9); and "there" seems "but a step between him and death" (1 Sam. xx. 3), when he will drop down "into darkness" (Isa. xlvii. 5, 1 Sam. ii. 9), deep "in the depths of hell" (Prov. ix. 18).

This is a brief, but not one whit exaggerated, description of the state of a fearful backslider given over to Satan, and smitten in conscience with the wrath of God—a sterile field set on fire from above, and recking under the smoke and burning of the pit.

But the reader may perhaps wish for some evidence in support of our positions, and it is only right that he should have it, and such evidence we shall now therefore proceed to adduce accordingly.

To begin with Scripture. We have a remarkable illustration of our subject in Saint Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians. In his first Epistle, we find the apostle addressing the Corinthians thus:—"It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed *might be taken away from among you*. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, *to deliver such an one unto Satan* for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. . . . Therefore *put away from among yourselves that wicked person*" (1 Cor. v. 1-5, 13).

Now here we have a case, where a member of the Christian church at Corinth had so far "fallen away" from Christ, as to have relapsed into the grossest fornication ; and where the members of the church, likewise, were so besotted with the prevail-

ing ungodliness (Corinth being a notoriously profligate and licentious city), that they allowed such a state of things to exist in the church, without censure ; and did not, as they ought to have done, at once cut off the offender from all church membership and privileges. The apostle, however, speaking by the Spirit of God, instantly delivers judgment upon the case, and urges them at once solemnly to excommunicate him, and cast him back, as it were, once more into the Gentile world, to which he had again apostatized—a world which lay “in (or under the dominion of) the wicked one” (ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ, 1 John v. 19) ; and, therefore, to deliver him over again unto Satan, “the god of this world,” whose blind and willing subject he before was, and had once again become.

But mark for what purpose ! Even this correction, fearfully severe as it was, was yet not for the sinner’s utter annihilation and destruction. No ! It was for his spiritual improvement and advantage. “Whom I have delivered unto Satan for the *destruction* of the *flesh*,” it is true, but “that the *spirit* may be *saved* in the day of the Lord Jesus.” It was not therefore for the destruction of the *sinner* ; but for the destruction of his *flesh*, that his *spirit* might be *saved*. But what was meant by the destruction of his *flesh* ? Some commentators suppose that as the church was gifted with miraculous powers in those days, the apostle signified that if

the Corinthians would cast this incestuous person out of their church, as he had instructed them to do, that sentence of excommunication would, under God, have such a terrible effect upon him, that his flesh would waste away from off his bones, and he would, when he saw the fearful consequences of his sins, be thereby induced to repent of his iniquities, and return to the God who had smitten him. And, possibly, this might have been the case, but yet we think this view by no means exhausts the meaning of the passage ; for the words “for the *destruction* of the flesh,” εἰς ὅλεθρον τῆς σαρκὸς, import *the utter destruction*, ruin, and *death* of the flesh—and it was to attain this end, that he was delivered over unto Satan, and this in effect, in part seemingly, before his complete restoration to God, which was certainly not fulfilled in the case of this person, as we gather from the subsequent Epistle. The flesh here, therefore, we think, clearly imports not the literal flesh alone of the person (which might perhaps and no doubt was *included* in it), but the “flesh” or *corrupt nature* of such person, a phrase which is used, in some other of St Paul’s Epistles, in contradistinction to “the spirit,” or *renewed nature* of the believer. (*Vide* Rom. viii., &c. ; Gal. v. &c.)

Now before man fell, his body was the handmaid and servant of his soul, which was originally created and employed for God’s glory ; but, the moment he fell, his soul was separated from, and lost its hold

upon, God, and falling down, as it were, to the level of his body, the body gained the supremacy, and from thenceforth the soul became, and still is the handmaid and slave of the body. It is absorbed, immersed, and lost, as it were, in the flesh ; and as God always calls things by their right names, he calls the now sensual, corrupt, and debased soul of man "the flesh" ; and it is *this* flesh, no doubt, to which the apostle here more particularly alludes. Hence the deeper the soul is sunk in the flesh, and the greater the prominence the flesh assumes, the more is the soul lost sight of ; and so prominent is the flesh, and so far has the soul sunk in some, as, for instance, among the most ignorant and degraded of the heathen, aye, and of so-called Christian nations likewise, that they seem scarcely above the level of the brutes. And again, among men who have been better taught, but who have pampered and indulged their animal and vicious nature, the same effect is produced ; the flesh so far predominates that the soul is quite lost sight of, and they are frequently tempted to deny, and, indeed, do deny, the very existence of that soul itself. Lord Byron, in his Diary of "Feb. 25. 1831," writes as follows :—" *I have neither read, nor written, nor thought, but led A PURELY ANIMAL LIFE all day. . . . Woke and was ill all day. . . . I remarked in my illness the complete inertion, inaction, and destruction of my mental faculties. I tried to rouse them, and yet could*

not. AND IS THIS THE SOUL?" (Extracted from that most interesting work "The Dens of London," by R. W. Vanderkiste, p. 224).

Hence again, when God would save a man, he commences by uniting his soul to himself in Christ, draws it up out of the flesh, in which it is sunk, and gives it at once a beginning of something of its lost supremacy. Then there commences the conflict between "the flesh" and the "spirit" (Gal. v. 17), which will issue in the triumph of the latter and the utter destruction of the former, with a new creation likewise of the body fitted in God's time for its renewed soul. So that when a man is converted, the death and utter destruction of his flesh is determined upon, and is in fact *begun to be put in exercise*. "His old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth he should not serve sin" (Rom. vi. 6). But when the man sins, he revivifies the flesh, and gives it an advantage over the spirit, and when he backslides and apostatizes from Christ, he, as it were, takes down the old man from the cross, and recrucifies Christ himself; he gives "the body of death" (Rom. vii. 24), within him such power over the soul, that it regains its lost ascendancy, and nothing but a direct and almighty act of God can reduce it again to subjection, or retransfix it to the cross of Christ. The soul relapsing into the flesh, if it is to be saved, must therefore be "delivered unto Satan *for the de-*

struction of the flesh." The end of the sterile field, therefore, becoming overgrown with thorns, is that it "*is to be burned.*" The delivering of this incestuous Corinthian, therefore, to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, was in fact nothing more or less than the burning of the sterile field, for the destruction of the thorns which had invested and overgrown its surface ; thorns being in Scripture language (see and compare Prov. xxiv. 31 ; Jer. iv. 3 ; with Matt. xiii. 7, 22 ; Mark iv. 7, 18, 19 ; Luke viii. 7, 14) the lust of this very flesh, the nature of which we have been considering.

And from his second Epistle to the Corinthians, we find that this punishment had precisely the effect which the apostle, under God, intended that it should have. For writing upon this subject to them he says : " But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me ? And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice ; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears ; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you. But if any have caused grief,

he hath not grieved me, but in part ; that I may not overcharge you all" (2 Cor. ii. 1-5). "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent : for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye *sorrowed to repentance* : for ye were made *sorry after a godly manner*, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For *godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of* : but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For, behold, this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, *what carefulness it wrought in you*, yea, *what clearing of yourselves*, yea, *what indignation*, yea, *what fear*, yea, *what vehement desire*, yea, *what zeal*, yea, *what revenge* ! *In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter*. Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you" (2 Cor. vii. 8-12).

Hence it appears that the apostle's ardent and powerful Epistle had awoke them to a proper sense of their danger, and to a right sense of their duty ; and, acting under his authority, and upon his advice, they had solemnly excommunicated the offending member, and cast him out of the church. It seems, however, they were now erring in the opposite ex-

treme, perhaps from a mistaken notion that the man was utterly lapsed and gone, and that it was, therefore, now impossible for him to be renewed or restored. Be this as it may, the effect of this discipline upon him was so severe that in a very short space of time (both Epistles having been written within the year), this sinner was brought down from the height of his proud ungodliness to the very lowest depths of misery, and was, at the time the apostle wrote his second Epistle, in such a despairing state of mind (the burning having so effectually done its work), that the apostle thought it necessary at once to instruct them as to his re-admission into the church, and his right, by reason of his repentance and reconciliation, to Christian communion and fellowship. “*Sufficient to such a man,*” says he, “*is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and COMFORT him, lest perhaps such an one should be SWALLOWED UP with OVERMUCH sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you, that ye would confirm YOUR LOVE TOWARD HIM*” (2 Cor. ii. 6–8).

And oh, what a sublime view does this present to us of the immense and inconceivable lovingkindness of God! Oh! backslider, does not your heart burn within you, and melt before God at the thought of it? “*Lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow!*” “*Lest perhaps*”—*μήπως*—that by *no* means—lest in *any* way such an

one should be “swallowed up with *overmuch* sorrow”—τῇ περισσοτέρᾳ λύπῃ καταποθῇ, overwhelmed by the *excess* of his sorrow ; the metaphor being taken from a drowning man swept away and engulfed in a torrent. The sorrow was sent him for a *special purpose*—his own individual restoration and renewal in holiness—but when it had *accomplished that purpose*,—oh ! *the moment it had accomplished it*, let it not be continued,—oh ! let it not be continued an instant ; but *for fear* the poor backslider should be drowned in an *excess* of grief,—*lest by any means* so sad an event should happen,—I beseech you, says the apostle, for “ye *ought*” to do so,—“I *beseech* you that ye would” “*forgive him and comfort him*,” and “*confirm your LOVE toward him*.”

Oh the inconceivable and amazing love and mercy of our God ! Oh ! backslider, may you look to the blessed Lord Jesus, and may he touch and melt your soul. “O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God ; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord : say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously : so will we render the calves of our lips” (Hosea xiv. 1, 2). And then he, even he whom thou hast offended, shall say to thee, even to thee, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely : for mine anger is turned away from him” (ver. 4). Oh ! backslider, if “God” were not “love” (1 John iv. 8), and if he were not “infinite” (Psa. cxlvii. 5), what would become of thee ?

The case of Peter seems also a case much in point, his apostasy being indeed a very fearful one, the full extent of his cursing and swearing (*καταναθεματίζειν καὶ ὀμνύειν*, Mat. xxvi. 74), amounting to this, that he might himself be devoted to utter destruction, if he ever even knew the man. And we are inclined also to think, that that of Hymeneus and Alexander is also illustrative of this text, “whom I have *delivered unto Satan* that they may learn (*παιδευθῶσι*, that they *may be taught*) not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. i. 20); but as this is all that is said about it in Scripture, we shall not here stop to inquire into it further.

Too many modern instances, alas ! might be cited, but we must content ourselves with two only :—one, which might almost be said to have occurred under the writer’s own personal observation ; and the other, a case selected from the admirable published Letters of Miss Helen Plumptre.

The first case was that of a young man who lived in London. His youthful life was, according to his own statement, marked by much ungodliness ; having early plunged headlong into that sin, which the Church of England has rightly characterised as “a deadly sin.” He was at length, however, converted, and for near a year “walked uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel.” It seems that he was very weak in faith, as he could not trust Christ if absent for a moment ; and as God began

at this period to shew him something of the hidden corruption and depravity of his heart, he mistook his purpose and object; and ultimately imagining that God had forsaken him, he fell into black despair. For some three months he continued in this state; and the agony he underwent at this period, he said, was almost unendurable. But this could not last for ever; and as his heart grew harder, his troubles ceased, and his corruptions, fanned by the prince of darkness, at last broke out again into a flame. For a long time he resisted sin with all his might; but as he had lost his armour, and now believed himself lost to all eternity, it prevailed at length; and he ultimately became as bad, if not worse, than he had been before.

In this wretched state he continued for about a year; always miserable beyond expression; but sometimes awfully smitten in conscience with the wrath of God. The sin which had seemed so pleasant to him at first, now seemed disgusting and loathsome; and yet he felt himself impelled forward in it with a power which he could not resist. Satan seemed completely to "lead him captive at his will." On one occasion, during this period, being unable to gratify his vicious propensities, he deliberately looked up into the heavens, and swore; and then instantly casting his eyes down upon the ground, in intense and bitter shame, he wept, and cursed the day that had given birth to such a wretch.

On another occasion he was overtaken by a thunderstorm. He believed God was about to strike him dead ; and he felt at that instant the most concentrated essence of misery, cowardice, ingratitude, and, what he called, hellish sneakiness towards God that could be conceived. The thunder, however, passed away, but not his fears with it, for that night he thought upon the occurrence with horror, and saw, as he thought, that the awful day was but postponed, and that his reckoning had yet to come. While thus miserably dwelling upon and bemoaning his wretchedness, Satan came down upon him like lightning ; and it seemed to him, he said, as if he were actually strangling his very soul. He rose up instantly in a fearful state of anguish, and a shriek of horror had involuntarily half forced itself from his lips, when the devil left him as suddenly as he had come upon him.

As he approached the period of his deliverance, he used to weep over his miseries, and bewail his sad state, and wish intensely that some good man or good woman had prayed over him, and blessed him, and had solemnly dedicated him to God when a boy, that he might never have become the wretch he was ; but there seemed to him then “ no voice nor any that answered.” His deliverance was brought about in the following manner :—Happening one day listlessly to take up a book, which proved to be a life of Christ, he opened it upon the

case of Peter, and was astonished to find that this was his very case. Once again assured that God had mercy in store for him, he set himself to return with all his might. But oh ! the miseries and difficulties that now encountered him ! His former coming to Christ was as nothing to this. That was like walking upon level ground. This was like clambering up a precipitous and almost inaccessible rock, with a torrent roaring and dashing down its surface, into a boiling gulf below. And oh ! the fearful conflicts which he then had with the prince of darkness, who now threw off the mask, and did not scruple to stand before him "as a roaring lion," "seeking to devour" him (1 Pet. v. 8). These conflicts, he said, left him absolutely torn in spirit (Psa. vii. 2), and he seemed like a wounded man weltering in his gore. Oh ! believer, if you fall from your "first love" (Rev. ii. 4, Ezek. xvi. 8), and "crucify the Son of God afresh," you are hastening, it may be, to tortures as intolerable as these !

This case made a deep impression upon the writer's mind. For some time he had great difficulty in believing that any person, who had fallen, so far as this young man had done, could possibly be restored to God ; but he was subsequently fully convinced, not only from his after conduct, but also from a careful consideration of Scripture, that it *was* possible ; and he had no reason whatever to

doubt this young man's restoration and renewal to repentance.

Since then he has met with another case, but as he has only authority to mention it generally, he can give no particulars. Suffice it to say, that this person, after giving many strong proofs of conversion, was ultimately drawn away from the profession of the gospel by the blandishments and seductions of the world, and continued for several years under the dominion of them, quite contented, and with no wish to return to God at all. When God's time, however arrived, the fire of his wrath came down upon him with a suddenness and a fury that was irresistible and awful. He had not a shadow of a hope left, and firmly believed that there was nothing whatever but hell for him. And yet this person was recovered, and restored, and pardoned.

The case which we have before alluded to, as mentioned by Miss Plumptre, is to be found in her published Letters, pp. 410-13. Writing to 'an afflicted friend in the year 1829, she says:—"I have, as you desired, my dear afflicted friend, been on my knees, begging, that *as the pen is in my hand, so I myself may be in the hand of my God*; that I may be only moved and guided by him; and that the words he teacheth me to say may indeed be 'a message from God' to your precious soul; for truly except he speak, vain is the help of man. The Holy Spirit has therefore been pleased to take

to himself the title of 'THE Comforter,' not a comforter, but *the* only one ; for you and I have both found, my dear fellow-traveller, that until *he* removes the burden from us, not all our companions, however kind, however desirous, can move it one inch ; and if he give the quietness, if it be but, as it were, with a look, who then can make trouble ? I have earnestly entreated him thus to turn and look upon you, my sorrowing friend ; but before I could ask, he seemed to say, How is it that thou dost not understand that *I am* looking upon her, or whence would arise those *groans of deep distress*, this *horror that hath overwhelmed her* ? Does Satan thus disturb his own ? Would drowsy, dead nature thus give the alarm ? Oh, Lord, I do see, and I would acknowledge, thy might. I find *no seared conscience here*, but the cries of thy own spirit, long indeed resisted, long unheeded, but *not quenched* ; no, nor ever shall be, till a worm be found stronger than Omnipotence, and exulting devils cry over the ruins of a deserted soul, ' Behold *here* proofs of weakness and impotency in the all-wise, all-powerful Jehovah, inasmuch as he began to build, and is not able to finish.' Oh, be such a thought far, far from us ! You ask me if I have ever known such a case as yours ; I am truly happy and thankful to have to tell you, that within the last three weeks, the blessed deliverance from even worse thralldom than you are in, of a poor woman in this place, has

come under my immediate notice. One with whom I used to take sweet counsel, who seemed to enjoy spiritual things, and whose only concern was, that her husband did not help her on in the way, was drawn away by the wiles of the devil, and has been *a fearful backslider*. She said *she felt that God had forsaken her ; that SATAN HAD FULL POSSESSION OF HER ; that there was not a promise that could reach her ; that all I said about her soul was useless, &c.* In this awful state she has continued above a year. . . . Last week a message was sent by a pious neighbour, to beg I would go and visit this poor woman, who was *seeking her long-lost Lord, sorrowing*. I went, and found that *the faithful Shepherd had indeed brought back his silly sheep from the wretched mountain on which it had been wandering in the cloudy and dark day*. In the night she had been roused with the inquiry, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ and the God of peace spoke his own sweet answer to her very heart, ‘Believe on the *Lord Jesus Christ*, and *thou SHALT be saved.*’ Once more she looked into her long unopened Bible ; once more she bent her stubborn knee ; once more she went up to the courts of the Lord. This was about ten days before I saw her. Her hope is indeed *very faint*, but it comes from *the God of hope*, and shall not make her ashamed. She appears like the poor backslider spoken of in Ezek. xvi. 63, as if she would never open her mouth

any more because of her shame, ‘*When* I am pacified towards thee for *all* that thou hast done, saith the Lord.’ I read to her Hosea xiv., to which she listened with many tears ; she now and then sobbed out, ‘ Oh, I am afraid I am lost ! ’ I said, ‘ I am very pleased to hear you call yourself by that name ; you are the very one then that Jesus came to seek and to save. I don’t ask how far you have been, for he does not ; I don’t ask how many calls you have slighted, for he does not ; but I can tell you this message from his own mouth, “ I will *heal* their backslidings, I will love them freely ; mine anger is turned away. They may remember, and go sorrowing at the remembrance ; but I will remember *no more*, it shall not be mentioned unto them.” ’ Oh, my friend, don’t think yours are the first wounds of the sort, or the worst that ever were taken in hand. The *first* they surely are not, as many a well-healed David could testify ; and the worst—oh, yes, say you, but they are the worst. Well, be it so ; but what are your wounds, that they should exhaust all the balm in Gilead, and withstand all the skill of that Almighty Physician ? Oh, no, no, no ! you shall yet sit at the feet of Jesus, watering them, it may be, with many tears ; but you shall sit and sing as in the days of your youth, and as in the day when you came up out of Egypt (Hosea ii. 15). The Lord shall speak comfortably to you, and the days of darkness and de-

sertion shall be ended. My paper is full, but my heart has not yet emptied itself. I will pour it out again to the Lord for you, and beg that he may put his blessing in this letter, and then it shall be blessed indeed.”

We shall close this portion of our subject, by a consideration of the past state and future condition of God's chosen people Israel, which we think the apostle, from his extensive knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures, from his intimate acquaintance with the then condition and future prospects of his nation (Rom. chap. ix., x., and xi.), and with his deep and ardent love for them (Rom. ix. 1-5, and x. 1, &c.) ; writing, as he was, to Hebrews themselves, and speaking primarily of Hebrews ; could hardly fail, from its extreme aptness, himself to have had in his mind at the time.* We shall ourselves see its aptness as we proceed. For when the apostle speaks of those to whom he addressed this Epistle, as “ beloved, we are persuaded better things of you,” &c., he speaks, no doubt, not only *charitably*, as is his wont, in all his Epistles, but *prophetically* also, if we may so say, contrasting those to whom he

* But whether the apostle himself had this in his mind or not, we believe that the blessed Spirit, who spoke by him, clearly alludes to it.

addressed this Epistle, the “remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom. xi. 5),—an election out of the nation at large—with that nation itself; of whom this passage was, even at the time he wrote, and would, ultimately, in a far more comprehensive manner, be true in a national sense. The following Scriptures will abundantly testify as to this fact; and we shall allow them to tell their own story, having merely connected them together for the purpose of presenting the subject before the reader in a more uniform manner.

Time was when God’s “well-beloved” Son “had a vineyard in *a very fruitful hill*; and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine: . . . and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes” (Isa. v. 1, 2). “For *the vineyard of the Lord of hosts was the house of Israel*, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry” (ver. 7). Therefore, says he, “I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be *trodden down*: and I will *lay it waste*: it shall not be pruned nor digged; but *there shall come up BRIERS AND THORNS*: I will also command *the clouds that they rain NO rain upon it*” (ver. 5, 6). “And it shall come to pass in that

day, that *every place shall be*, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, *it shall even be for BRIERS AND THORNS*. With arrows and with bows shall men come thither ; because *all the land shall become BRIERS AND THORNS*" (chap. vii. 23, 24 ; see also chap. xxxii. 13). " I beheld," says one, in prophetic anticipation, " and, lo, the *fruitful place was a wilderness*" (Jer. iv. 26). " Say unto her," saith the Lord, "*Thou,*" even thou, (who would have thought it ?) thou " art *the land* that is *not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation*" (Ezek. xxii. 24).

And who hath done all this ? " Many *pastors* have *destroyed my vineyard*, they have *trodden my portion under foot*, they have made my *pleasant portion a desolate wilderness*" (Jer. xii. 10). It was you, O " Scribes and Pharisees," you, and your worthy successors, the Rabbis, who " shut up the kingdom of heaven against men," who " neither went in yourselves, neither would suffer them that were entering to go in" (Matt. xxiii. 13), that wrought all this wretchedness. "*They* have made it *desolate*, and being desolate it mourneth unto me ; *the whole land is made desolate*, because no man layeth it to heart" (Jer. xii. 11 ; see also chap. xxii. 6, Hos. ii. 3, Psa. lxviii. 6, &c.).

Long time, indeed, was this most terrible and just judgment in coming upon that nation, but it came at last ; and when it did come, it came in its

perfection (Luke xi. 47-51). "When the husbandmen saw the son," and "caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him" (Matt. xxi. 38, 39); and "forbad" his apostles, "to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway:" then, indeed, "*the wrath came upon them to the uttermost*" (1 Thess. ii. 16). Then, indeed, it was time that "the whole land should be *devoured with the fire of his jealousy*" (Zeph. i. 18; see also iii. 8). Long time had they been threatened, and exhorted, and encouraged, "Seek the Lord, and ye shall live, lest he *break out like fire* in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel" (Amos v. 6); and forewarned that "the Lord God *would call to contend by fire*" (chap. vii. 4), but yet all to no purpose. Therefore, at last, the "fire was *kindled* against Jacob, and *anger* also came up against Israel" (Psa. lxxviii. 21). "For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be *with burning and fuel of fire*" (Isa. ix. 5). "For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts" (ver. 13). "For wickedness burneth as the fire: *it shall devour the BRIERS AND THORNS, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest*; and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke. Through *the wrath of the Lord of hosts* is the land darkened, and the people

shall be *as the fuel of the fire* : no man shall spare his brother. And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry ; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied : they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm ; Manasseh, Ephraim ; and Ephraim, Manasseh : and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his *anger* is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still" (ver. 18-21). "For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth, (*i. e.* the land of Israel—see in proof Deut. xxxii. 13 ; Isa. lviii. 14 ; Ezek. xxxvi. 2). And *the mountains shall be molten under him*, and the valleys shall be cleft, *as wax before the fire*, and the waters that are poured down a steep place. For the *transgression of JACOB is ALL this, and for the sins of the house of Israel*" (Micah i. 3-5). "Therefore as the *fire devoureth the stubble*, and the *flame consumeth the chaff*, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust ; because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the holy one of Israel. Therefore is the *anger* of the Lord *kindled* against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them : and the hills did tremble, and their carcases were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his *anger* is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still" (Isa. v. 24, 25, see also chap. xxxiii. 11).

“Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of Man, set thy face toward the south, and drop thy word toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the south field ; and say to the *forest of the south*, Hear the word of the Lord ; Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will *kindle fire* in thee, and it shall *devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree : the flaming flame shall not be quenched*, and all faces from the south to the north *shall be burnt therein*. And all flesh shall see that *I the Lord have kindled it* : it shall not be quenched. Then said I, Ah Lord God ! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables ?” (Ezek. xx. 45-49).

“I the Lord have kindled it !” Yes, “this is not *a chance* thing that is happened unto them,” “but *his* hand hath done them this great evil.” “Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers ? did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned ? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he hath poured upon them *the fury of his anger*, and the strength of battle : AND IT HATH SET HIM ON FIRE ROUND ABOUT, yet he knew not ; *and it burned him*, yet he laid it not to heart,” (Isa. xlii. 24, 25). For upwards of eighteen hundred years has God’s hand lain heavy upon them, still have they not even yet found out the reason. “Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see : but,” says he, “they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people ;

yea, THE FIRE OF THINE ENEMIES SHALL DEVOUR THEM" (Isa. xxvi. 11).

And fearful as have been their sufferings, and prolonged their miseries, yet their great and final day of trouble has even yet to come. "Of the Rock that begat them they were unmindful, and forgot God that formed them. And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be : for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God ; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities ; and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people ; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation, (a passage which the apostle quotes as having reference to the calling of the Gentiles, and the temporary rejection of the Jews, Rom. x. 19). *For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.* I will heap mischiefs upon them ; I will *spend* my arrows upon them. They shall be *burnt* with hunger, and *devoured with burning heat*, and with bitter destruction : I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young

man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs. I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men. Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this. For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them" (Deut. xxxii. 18-28).

"Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you *into the midst of Jerusalem*. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, *into the midst of the furnace*, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it ; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will *gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof*. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof ; and ye shall know that I the Lord have *poured out my fury upon you*." (Ezek. xxii. 19-22 ; see also Isa. xxxi. 9). "For thus saith the Lord, We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child ? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness ? Alas ! for

that day is great, so that none is like it : it is even the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. xxx. 5-7)—"A time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" (Dan. xii. 1)—a time of trouble that will then indeed force them to cry out in the touching words, put into their mouth by the prophet, who prophesied of these things, "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!" (Jer. xiv. 19).

"I say then, *Hath* God cast away his people? God forbid! God hath *not* cast away his people which he foreknew" (Rom. xi. 1, 2). Speaking reverently, how could God cast away those whom he foreknew? "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. viii. 29, 30), *i. e.* in purpose. That nation has yet *as a nation* to be justified, and to glory in him whom they have rejected. No! "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew." Even the "land"—"the Lord thy God careth for : the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of

the year." (Deut. xi. 12 ; see also 1 Kings ix. 3 ; 2 Chron. vii. 16). And of the people, he says " I have given *the dearly beloved of my soul* into the hand of her enemies" (Jer. xii. 7). " As concerning the *gospel*," O Gentiles, " they are" indeed "*enemies* for your sakes : but as touching the *election*, they are *beloved* for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 28, 29). " Jacob" may therefore have his " time of trouble" (when he "*looked* for healing, behold ! *trouble*") "*but* he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off his neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him : but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord ; neither be dismayed, O Israel : for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity ; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee : though I make a full end of all nations whether I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee ; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (Jer. xxx. 7-11). For " in measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it : he stayeth his rough wind in the day of

the east wind. *By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin*" (Isa. xxvii. 8, 9). " O Israel, thou hast *destroyed thyself*." Alas ! then is there *no* remedy ? " but in *me* is thine help. *I* will be thy king : where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities ?" (Hos. xiii. 9, 10). " Is there no balm in Gilead ? is there no physician there ? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered ?" (Jer. viii. 22).

Why ? Because they will not *come* for healing ! can they plead *ignorance* ? " But I say, Have they not heard ? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel *know* ? First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not ; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me, (*i. e.* the Gentiles). But to *Israel*, he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a *disobedient and gainsaying people*" (Rom. x. 18-21). For said Paul, " Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand ; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive : for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they

closed ; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Acts xxviii. 25-27). For, as he says in another place, "Moses put a vail over his face" (see the story, Exod. xxxiv. 29-35), to shew "that the children of Israel," whom he thereby typified, "could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:" (viz. the law of Moses "which was" to be "done away," see ver. 7, 11) "but their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which vail is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, (*i. e.* the Lord Jesus, for he says above, the vail is done away *in Christ*, ver. 14), the vail shall be taken away" (2 Cor. iii. 13-16).

And will that nation then that has "crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. ii. 8), that has spit upon and smitten, and buffeted him who is "the desire of *all* nations" (Hag. ii. 7), that has cast out, rejected, and "trodden under foot the Son of God" (Heb. x. 29), ever be brought to receive him, to acknowledge him, to believe in him? The Scriptures most implicitly assure us that it will. For Moses, addressing the Israelites, tells them, that "it shall come to pass, when all these things are come

upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whether the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice, according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul ; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return, and gather thee from all nations whether the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee. And the Lord thy God will bring thee into this land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it ; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the Lord thy God, will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live" (Deut. xxx. 1-6). From which Scripture we learn that when the nation generally will, in deep earnestness, truthfulness, and sincerity, reflect upon the reasons of God's dealings with them, and wholly and universally reject the Talmud, and all their superstitious rites and ceremonies, and resolutely and earnestly return unto the law of Moses, as enjoined upon them in that day ; that then the Lord will gather them out from the nations

among whom they are scattered, and will restore them to their own land ; and that after he has thus gathered them, and while they are thus restored, he will “ make a new covenant with them,” even the new covenant in Christ Jesus, whereby he “ will put his laws into their minds and write them in their hearts : and will be to them a God, and they shall be to him a people” (Heb. viii. 8-10 ; x. 16 ; Jer. xxxi. 31-34).

To the same purport speaks the prophet Ezekiel, “ As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you : and I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, *and with fury poured out.* And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And *I will cause you to pass under the rod.* And *I will bring you into the bond of the covenant :* and *I will purge out from among you the rebels,* and them that transgress against me : I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezek. xx. 33-38). “ For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height

of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me : there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first-fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered ; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. And *there* shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled ; and ye shall loath yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. xx. 40-44).

" Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them ; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the

Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. *Then* will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers ; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses ; and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. *Then* shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you : be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God, In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land

shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden ; and the waste, and desolate, and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you, shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate : I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them ; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men ; and they shall know that I am the Lord " (Ezek. xxxvi. 22-38).

As to the *time* of their conversion, we see from these Scriptures that it will take place after they are brought back to, and while they are gathered together in their own land. As to the *manner* and *circumstances* of it, these we are taught elsewhere. As to the *manner* of it, St Paul tells us that it will be precisely like his own conversion. " This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern (ὑποτύπωσιν, representation) to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting " (1 Tim. i.

15, 16). Now, St Paul was converted, as St Luke informs us, in the Acts of the Apostles, instantaneously, by looking up to our Lord Jesus, as revealed to him for that purpose, from heaven (chap. ix. 3-7, 17; xxii. 6-11; xxvi. 13-19; especially vers. 16 and 19; Gal. i. 15, 16, &c.); and the Jews, the prophetic Scriptures assure us, and as we shall presently see, will be converted precisely in the same manner.

As to the *circumstances* of it, these are also clearly revealed to us in Scripture. See them recorded more particularly in the 3d chapter of Joel, and in the 14th chapter of Zechariah. From these Scriptures we learn, that it will be while they are in the height of their distress and anguish, while their enemies are gathered together against them to battle, after they are restored to their own land, and also after the Lord has "been inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them" (Ezek. xxxvi. 37). "O Lord," we are taught they will then say, "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return, for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. We are thine: thou never bearest rule over them; they were not called by thy name" (Isaiah lxiii. 17-19). "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come

down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence ; as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil ; to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence !" (chap. lxiv. 1, 2). "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness ; those that remember thee in thy ways : behold, thou art wroth ; for we have sinned : in those is continuance, and we shall be saved. But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags ; and we all do fade as a leaf ; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee : for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, thou art our father : we are the clay, and thou our potter ; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever : behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire : and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord ? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore ?" (ver. 5-12).

And then comes, "The burden of the word of

the Lord *for* Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people : all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness ; and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and I will smite every horse of the people with blindness. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength (or, margin, There is strength to me and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem), in the Lord of Hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf ; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left : and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants

of Jerusalem ; and he that is feeble (margin, abject or fallen) among them at that day shall be as David ; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. *And I will POUR UPON the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications ; and THEY SHALL LOOK UPON ME WHOM THEY HAVE PIERCED, and they shall MOURN FOR HIM, AS ONE MOURNETH FOR HIS ONLY SON, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.* In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon (2 Kings xxiii. 29, compared with 2 Chron. xxxv. 24). And the land shall mourn, every family apart ; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart ; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart ; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart ; the family of Shimei (or of Simeon) apart, and their wives apart ; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.* And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered ; and also I will cause the prophets and the

unclean spirits to pass out of the land" (Zech. xii., xiii. 1, 2). "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die ; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part **THROUGH THE FIRE**, *and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried* : they shall call on my name, and I will hear them : I will say, It is my people ; and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (ver. 8, 9).

And oh what an astonishing instance of the Lord's "all longsuffering" mercy and goodness is here ! (1 Tim. i. 16). That they who have spouted out their blasphemies against him (Luke xxii. 65 ; Acts xiii. 45 ; xviii. 6 ; Rom. ii. 24 ; 1 Tim. i. 13 ; James ii. 7, &c.) ; "and cursed their king and their God" (Isa. viii. 21,) for well nigh two thousand years, that *they* should ever look unto him and be saved ! Amazing, inconceivable mercy ! Yes, they, even "*They shall look upon him whom they have pierced and mourn !*" And then shall that whole nation, prostrate before Jehovah-Jesus, confess the "iniquities which have separated between them and their God, and those sins which have hid his face from them, so that he will not hear" (Isa. lix. 2). Then shall that whole "nation" "be born" "in one day" (Isa. lxvi. 8, 9) ; and by consequence also "the Lord of hosts" "will remove the iniquity of that land in one day" (Zech. iii. 9) ; for "In those days, and in that time, saith

the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for (by the great adversary of souls, *vide* Zech. iii. especially ver. 1-4), and there shall be none ; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found ; for I will pardon them whom I reserve" (Jer. l. 20). "Oh ! Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage ? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us ; he will subdue our iniquities : and thou wilt cast their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Micah vii. 18-20). "And so *all* Israel shall be saved" (Rom. xi. 26).

"And so *all* Israel shall be saved !" But perhaps you may say this means the nation *generally* in contradistinction to the "remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. xi. 5), which is now being gathered in. But is it not said, "in the Lord shall *all* the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (Isa. xlv. 25) ? But perhaps you say again, that this means no more than that all who will be justified, will be justified in the Lord Jesus alone. But does not Daniel say, "*Blessed* is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days" (Daniel xii. 12), when "the end be" (ver. 13). Now, if any were *not converted* at

that period, then there would be *some* who waited, and came to that day who were *not blessed* ; and so this Scripture would not be true, which is impossible. But if even this be not sufficient to satisfy you, then we say that God himself has declared of them, “Thy people also shall be *all* righteous : they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified” (Isa. lx. 21) ; “open ye the gates, that the *righteous nation* which keepeth the truth may enter in” (Isa. xxvi. 2).

Not that we mean to say positively that every future born Israelite will of necessity be a converted man, for we have no Scriptural warrant for any such assertion ; indeed, we are told of “the sinner being an hundred years old, and being *accursed*” (Isa. lxv. 20), viz. unconverted ; the duration of life at the period spoken of (*i. e.* the millennium) being very greatly extended, so much so, indeed, as to rival even the patriarchal age, so that if a person died at “an hundred years old” he would be considered a mere “child ;” and this would be looked upon, if not indeed be, a judgment of God upon him for sin : but what we have said has reference solely to the nation’s conversion to God after their return to their own land : for it is after that, it is said of them, that “they are *the seed of the blessed of the Lord*, and their offspring with them” (ver. 23). For “behold, the days come, saith the

Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah ; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt ; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord ; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel ; after those days, saith the Lord, *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts ; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.* And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord : for *they shall ALL know me, FROM THE LEAST OF THEM UNTO THE GREATEST OF THEM,* saith the Lord ; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more" (Jer. xxxi. 31-34). This is decisive.

And does *looking* do all this ? Ah ! yes, *looking at him whom they have pierced !* one single look at that once crucified, but now exalted, Lord and Saviour, one simple act of faith in him, who is almighty to save, sufficeth. "They looked unto him, and were lightened : and their faces were not ashamed" (Psa. xxxiv. 5). But if looking at the blessed Lord Jesus will produce such glorious consequences, how was it that they underwent all these protracted miseries and still hid their faces from him, and still refused to be reconciled ? Because in them, as

we before said, was fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, "Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand ; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive : for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed ; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Acts xxviii. 26, 27). And, therefore, they "hid as it were their faces from him," and would not look at him because they "despised and esteemed him not" (Isa. liii. 3). And dost thou wonder ? Why, unconverted sinner, hast thou not done the very same ? How long hast thou lived without looking, and art thou looking even yet ? And is not the same promise made to thee, O Gentile, even unto thee ? "*Look* unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength : even to him shall men come ; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed" (Isa. xlv. 22-24). And can you see the blessed Lord Jesus wounded, bruised, bleeding, dying for your sins, and yet not look upon him, not believe on him, not love him, not adore him ? O

sinner ! unconverted sinner ! art not thou the Jew that pierced him ? Have not thy sins wounded him ? And wilt not thou then be the "Israelite indeed" to "look upon him and mourn ?" O, look and be saved, look, look, and live !

And now the burning fire has fully done its work upon that once sterile field, and the barren land is rendered even more fruitful than in times past. The nation having been delivered unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, has now been completely restored to God, and its spirit fully saved in this the day of the Lord Jesus. The reader, although he may not have seen, may yet perhaps have read, a description of the burning of one of the great North American prairies, which is said to be one of the grandest and most terrible spectacles in nature. He may have followed in spirit the rushing and roaring of that tremendous and destructive element, as it swept rapidly along the plain ; rushing through the long rank grass with a noise like thunder, and consuming everything in its progress ; while volumes of dense black smoke rose upward to the sky : and he may have pictured to himself the utter desolation that followed, and the melancholy aspect of that immense plain, after the fire had done its fearful work upon it, as it stretched out before him, burnt up and boundless ; presenting one uniform black surface like a vast field of charcoal. Such will Israel be "when the Lord shall wash

away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, *by the spirit of JUDGMENT, and by the spirit of BURNING*" (Isa. iv. 4). He may have read also of the verdant and flowery appearance of that same prairie, after the first plentiful rain had fallen upon it after the fire ; presenting to the eye, as it then did, nothing but one immense sea of green, carpeted with flowers. Such will Israel be when "the Spirit is" again "poured upon him from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field," so that "the fruitful field shall be counted as a forest" (Isa. xxxii. 15).

The reader may have read likewise of the utterly barren and desolate appearance of the plains of Africa before a season of rain ; and more especially after a period during which the terrible Harmattan has prevailed, when everything is dried up and withered by that desolating wind, or burnt up by the scorching heat of a tropical sun ; and yet, that even in one night, after the windows of heaven have been opened upon it, and the clouds have dropped down their dew, the whole land has been suddenly transformed into one immense tract of verdure, blooming with gorgeous and attractive flowers. In the former state we see Israel—"at that time" when "it was said to this people, and to Jerusalem, *A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to*

cleanse, even a full wind from those places (margin, a fuller wind than those) shall come unto me : now also will I give sentence against them" (Jer. iv. 11, 12, see also Hosea xiii. 15)—"made like a *wilderness* and set like a *dry land*" (Hosea ii. 3). But when "the heavens drop down" upon him "from above, and the skies pour down righteousness" (Isa. xlv. 8), then "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them ; and the *desert* shall *rejoice*, and *blossom as the rose*. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing" (Isa xxxv. 1, 2). "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped : then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing : for *in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert*. And the *parched ground* shall become a pool, and the *thirsty land springs of water*" (ver 5-7). "Then judgment shall dwell in the *wilderness*, and *righteousness* remain in the *fruitful field*. And the work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever" (Isa. xxxii. 16, 17). "For the Lord shall comfort Zion : he will comfort all her *waste places* ; and he will make her *wilderness* like Eden, and her *desert like the garden of the Lord* ; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody" (Isa. li. 3). "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root : Israel shall *blossom and bud*, and *fil the face*

of the world with fruit" (Isa. xxvii. 6). "Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people" (Joel ii. 18). "Fear not, O land ; be glad and rejoice : for the Lord will do great things" (ver. 21). "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them, I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys : I will make *the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water*. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree ; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, and the pine, and the box-tree together ; *that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the holy one of Israel hath created it*" (Isa. xli. 17-20). "And all nations shall call you *blessed* : for ye shall be a *delightful land*, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. iii. 12). "And their *soul* shall be as a *watered garden* : and they shall not sorrow any more at all" (Jer. xxxi. 12) ; "for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord" (v. 13, 14). O, "ye that are the Lord's remembrancers" (Isa. lxii. 6, margin), "let Jerusalem come into your mind" (literally "let Jerusalem be *uppermost in your mind*" Jer. li. 50) ;

“and give him no rest till he” thus “establish, and till he” thus “make Jerusalem a praise in the earth” (Isa. lxii. 7).

To notice God's future dealings with Israel, and his future purposes with regard to that nation after their conversion, would be foreign to our present purpose. We should, indeed, have much wished to have closed this subject with this glorious instance of God's long-suffering grace and mercy, but truthfulness and consistency of interpretation oblige us to add, that if the whole passage in Hebrews, which we have been considering, refers not only to those who may be saved from such a state, but also to those who may be lost, and will finally be left to perish in it, then the apostle's argument necessarily also requires that the burning here referred to should not only be considered as a burning, primarily, for the *improvement* of the subject of it, but also, secondarily, as a *punishment*—we mean an ultimate punishment—in which case the burning would no doubt, in the ultimate sense, signify the burning of hell fire—that “lake which burneth with fire and brimstone : which is the second death” (Rev. xxi. 8). And, for ought we know to the contrary, some enlightened but unconverted backsliders may be burnt in the first sense, without such burning producing in them the effect

which it produces in others—we mean an ameliorating effect—and then there would of course remain for them nothing but “a fearful looking for of judgment,” and of that further “fiery indignation which shall” ultimately “devour” all “the adversaries” (Heb. x. 27). For He that saith his “*fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem*” (Isa. xxxi. 9), saith also, “behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven ; and all the proud, yea, and ALL *that do wickedly*, shall be *stubble* : and the day that cometh shall *burn them up*, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch” (Mal. iv. 1).

Having, therefore, given instances, in previous pages, of the restoration of fearful backsliders ; we think it but right, also, to add here a case or two of an opposite character.

We shall first cite the case of Francis Spira, that miserable man who was the original of Bunyan’s “man in the iron cage.” (*Vide* his “Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners.”)

Francis Spira was an advocate in the town of Cittadella in Italy, at the time of the Reformation. He made a profession of the gospel in the year 1548, “ever pressing,” as his narrative records, “this maine point, that we must wholly and only depend on the free and unchangeable love of God in the death of Christ, as the only sure way to salvation : and this was the summe of all his dis-

course, and this continued for the space of sixe years, or thereabouts.”*

These things, however, coming to the ears of John Casa, the Pope’s Legate, resident at Venice, he “with speed repaires to the Senate and procures authoritie from them to send for Spira.”†

Spira, foresceing this storm, consults with flesh and blood ; and striving against the remonstrances of God’s Spirit, “fearing hee faints, and yeelds unto the allurements of this present world ; and being thus blinded, he goes to the Legate at Venice, and salutes him with this news. ‘Having for these divers yeares entertained an opinion concerning some articles of faith, contrary to the orthodox, and received judgment of the Church ; and uttered many things against the authority of the Church of Rome, and the universall Bishop ; I humbly acknowledge my fault and errour, and my folly in misleading others ; I therefore yeeld myself in all obedience to the supreme Bishop, into the bosom of the Church of Rome ; never to depart againe from the traditions and decrees of the holy see ; I am heartily sorry for what is past ; and I humbly beg pardon for so great an offence.’

* A Relation of the Fearefull Estate of Francis Spira, in the year 1548. London : Printed by I. L. for Phil. Stephens, and Christoph. Meredith, at the Golden Lyon, in Paul’s Church Yard, 1638. pp. 8, 9.

† Ib. p. 15.

“ The Legate perceiving Spira to faint, he pursues him to the utmost ; he causeth a recitation of all his errours to be drawn in writing, together with the confession annexed to it, and commands Spira to subscribe his name there, which accordingly he did ; then the Legate commands him to return to his own towne ; and there to declare this confession of his, and to acknowledge the whole Doctrine of the Church of Rome to bee holy and true, and to abjure the opinions of Luther, and other such Teachers, as false and hereticall : *Man knowes the beginnings of sinne, but who bounds the issues thereof ?* Spira having once lost footing, goes downe amaine, hee cannot stay, nor gainsay the Legate ; but promiseth to accomplish his whole will and pleasure ; he soon addresseth himself for his Journey, and being onward in the way, bethinkes himselfe of large spoyles he had brought away from the conflict with the Legate ; what glorious testimony hee hath given of his great faith, and constancie in Christ’s cause ; and, to be plaine, *how impiously hee had denied Christ*, and his gospel at Venice ; and what he promised to doe further in his owne country.”*

A terrible conflict now takes place in the wretched man’s spirit, but still consulting with flesh and blood, he resists more violently the pleadings

* Relation, pp. 25-31.

of God's Spirit, and, "utterly overcome, goes to the Prætor, and proffers to performe his aforesaid promise made to the Legate, who, in the mean time, had taken order to have all things ready, and had sent the instrument of abjuration signed by Spira, to the Prætor, by the hands of a certaine Priest. All that night the miserable man ware out with restless cares, without any minute of rest; the next morning being come hee gets up, and being ready he desperately enters into the publique congregation, where Masse being finished, in the presence of friends and enemies, and of the whole Assembly; being by estimation neere two thousand people; yea, and of Heaven it selfe, he recites that infamous abjuration, word for word as it was written: it being done, he was fined thirty pieces of gold, which he presently paid; five whereof were given to the Priest who brought the abjuration, the other twenty-five were imployed towards the making of a Shryne to put the Eucharist in; then was he sent home restored to his Dignities, goods, wife, and children: no sooner was hee departed, but hee thought hee heard a direfull voyce, saying to him, *Thou wicked wretch, thou hast denyed me, thou hast renounced the covenant of thy obedience, thou hast broken thy vow, hence Apostate, beare with thee the sentence of thy eternall damnation*; hee trembling and quaking in body and mind, fell down in a swoune; relief was at hand for the body, but

*from that time forwards, he never found any peace or ease of his minde ; but continuing in uncessant torments, he professed that he was captived under the revenging hand of the great God : that hee heard continually that fearfull sentence of Christ, that just judge ; that hee knew he was utterly undone : that hee could neither hope for grace, nor Christ's intercession with God the Father in his behalfe : thus was his fault ever heavy on his heart, and ever his Judgment before his eyes."**

As his case began to be noised abroad, " there came multitudes of all sorts to see him : some out of curiositie onely to see and discourse : some out of a pious desire to try all means that might reduce him to comfort againe, or, at least, to benefit themselves, by such a spectacle of misery, and of the justice of God. Amongst these, Paulus Vergerius, Bishop of Justinopolis, and Matheus Gribauldus, deserve especially to be named, as the most principall labourers for this man's comfort. They finde him now about fifty years of age, neither afflicted with the dotage of old age, nor with the unconstant headstrong passion of youth, but in the strength of his experience and judgment ; in a burning heat, calling excessively for drink ; yet his understanding active, quicke of apprehension, wittie in dis-

* Relation, pp. 40-46.

course above his ordinary manner, and judiciously opposite.”*

“His friends saluted him, and asked him, what hee conceived to be the cause of his disease ; forthwith he broke out into a lamentable discourse of the passages formerly related, and that with such passionate Elocution, that hee caused many to weep and most to tremble. They, contrarily to comfort him, propounded many of God’s promises recorded in the Scripture ; and many examples of God’s mercy. *My sinne* (said he) *is greater than the mercy of God.* Nay, answered they, the mercy of God is above all sin ; God would have all men to be saved : It is true (quoth he) hee would have all that hee hath elected to be saved ; *he would not have damned reprobates to be saved ; I am one of that number ; I know it, for I willingly, and against my knowledge, denied Christ ; and I feelee that hee hardens and will not suffer me to hope.*

“After some silence, one asked him whether hee did not believe that Doctrine (to be true), for which he was accused before the Legate ; hee answered, *I did believe it when I denied it, but now I neither believe that, nor the doctrine of the Romane church ; I believe nothing, I have no faith, no trust, no hope ; I am a Reprobate like Cain, or Judas, who, casting away all hope of mercy, fell into despair ; and my*

* Relation, pp. 54-56.

friends doe me great wrong that they suffer me not to goe to the place of unbelievers as I justly deserve.”*

On another occasion, on one reminding him of the cases of Job and David, “O, brother, (answered Spira), I believe all this ; the devils believe and tremble ; but David was ever elected and dearly beloved of God ; and though he fell, yet God tooke not utterly away his Holy Spirit ; and, therefore, was heard when hee prayed, Lord, take not thy Holy Spirit from mee ; *but I am in another case, being ever accursed from the presence of God ; neither can I pray as he did, because his Holy Spirit is quite gone, and cannot be recalled ; and, therefore, I know I shall live in continuall hardness so long as I live.* O that I might feel but the least sense of the love of God to me, though but for one small moment, as *I now feel his heavy wrath, that burnes like the torments of hell within me, and afflicts my conscience with pangs unutterable, verily desperation is hell it self.*”†

Some of his friends desiring to comfort him with that passage of Scripture, 1 Sam. ii. 6, which speaks of God “bringing down to hell, and raising up :” “This is the work (quoth Spira), this the labour ; for I tell you, when I at Venice did first abjure my profession, and so, as it were, drew an Indenture,

* Relation, pp. 59-63.

† Ibid. pp. 87-89.

the Spirit of God often admonisht me ; and when at Cittadella, I did, as it were, set to my Seale ; the Spirit of God often suggested to mee, Doe not write, Spira, doe not seale ; YET I RESISTED THE HOLY GHOST, AND DID BOTH : AND AT THAT VERIE PRESENT I DID EVIDENTLY FEELE A WOUND INFLICTED IN MY VERY WILL, *so although I can say, I would believe, yet can I not say, I wil believe ; God hath denied mee the power of will ; and it befals me, in this my miserable estate, as with one that is fast in irons, and his friends coming to see him, do pitie his estate, and doe persuade him to shake off his fetters, and to come out of his bonds, which God knows hee would faine do, but cannot, this is my very case ; you persuade me to believe, how faine would I doe it, but cannot ? O now, I cannot.*" *

* Relation, pp. 94-97. Compare with this the following passage from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* :—

" So he took him by the hand again, and led him into a very dark room, where there sat *a man in an iron cage*.

" Now the man, to look on, seemed very sad ; he sat with his eyes looking down on the ground, his hands folded together, and he sighed as if he would break his heart. Then said Christian, What means this ? At which the Interpreter bid him talk with the man.

" CHR. Then said Christian to the man, What art thou ?

" MAN. The man answered, I am what I was not once.

" CHR. What wast thou once ?

" MAN. The man said, I was once a fair and flourishing

“Then after some pause. It is wonderful, I earnestly desire to pray to God with my heart, yet

professor, both in mine own eyes, and also in the eyes of others ; I once was, as I thought, fair for the celestial city, and had even joy at the thoughts that I should get thither (Luke viii. 13).

“CHR. Well, but what art thou now ?

“MAN. I am now a man of despair, and *am shut up in it, as in this iron cage*. I cannot get out. *Oh, now I cannot !*

“CHR. But how camest thou into this condition ?

“MAN. I left off to watch and be sober ; I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts ; I sinned against the light of the word, and the goodness of God ; *I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone* ; I tempted the devil, and he is come to me ; I have provoked God to anger, and he has left me ; *I have so hardened my heart*, that I cannot repent.

“Then said Christian to the Interpreter, But are there no hopes for such a man as this ? Ask him, said the Interpreter.

“CHR. Then said Christian, Is there no hope, but you must be *kept in the iron cage* of despair ?

“MAN. No, none at all !

“CHR. Why ? The Son of the Blessed is very pitiful.

“MAN. I have crucified him to myself afresh (Heb. vi. 6), I have despised his person (Luke xix. 14), I have despised his righteousness, I have counted his blood an unholy thing ; I have done despite to the Spirit of grace (Heb. x. 28, 29) ; therefore *I have shut myself out of all the promises, and there now remains to me nothing but threatenings*, dreadful threatenings, fearful threatenings of certain judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour me as an adversary.

“CHR. For what did you bring yourself into this condition ?

I cannot ; *I see my damnation, and I know my remedie is onlie in Christ, yet I cannot set myselfe to laie hold on it ; such are the punishments of the damned ;* they confesse what I confesse, they repent of their loss of heaven, they envie the Elect, yet their repentance doth them no good for they cannot mind their waies.”*

On one of his friends asking him upon what grounds he conceived so ill an opinion of himself, he said, “ I once did know God to bee my Father, not onely by creation, but by regeneration, I knew him by his beloved Sonne, the authour and finisher

“ MAN. For the lusts, pleasures, and profits of this world ; in the enjoyment of which I did then promise myself much delight : *but now every one of those things also bite me, and gnaw me, like a burning worm.*

“ CHR. But canst thou not now repent and turn ?

“ MAN. *God hath denied me repentance.* His word gives me no encouragement to believe ; yea, *himself hath shut me up* in this iron cage ; nor can all the men in the world let me out. O eternity ! eternity ! how shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet with in eternity !

“ INTER. Then said the Interpreter to Christian, Let this man’s misery be remembered by thee, and be an everlasting caution to thee.

“ CHR. Well, said Christian, this is fearful ! God help me to watch and be sober, and to pray that I may shun the cause of this man’s misery. Sir, is it not time for me to go on my way now ?”

* Relation, pp. 98, 99.

of our salvation ; I coulde pray to him, and hope for pardon of sins from him : I had a taste of his sweetness, peace, and comfort ; now contrarily, I know God not as a Father but as an enemie ; what more ? my heart hates God, and seeks to get above him. I have nothing else to flie to but terrour and despaire.

“ Belike you think then (said they) that those who have the earnest and first-fruits of God’s Spirit, may notwithstanding fall away ?

“ The judgements of God are a deepe abisse, (said hee), we are soon drowned if we enter into them : he that thinks hee standeth, let him take heed lest he fall : *as for myself, I know I am fallen backe ; and that I once did know the truth ;* THOUGH IT MAY BE NOT SO THROUGHLY ; I know not what else to say, but that I am one of that number, which God hath threatened to teare in pieces.”*

Paulus Vergirius having earnestly importuned him “ to return to that faith and hope, which once hee had in the death of Christ, with many such like words : Spira having heard much of the like matter formerly, and being somewhat moved, said, ‘ you do but repeat, Vergerius, what should I hope ? Why should I beleieve ? God hath taken faith from mee : shew mee, then, whither I shal go : shew me a haven whereto I shall retire ; you tel me of

* Relation, pp. 120-123.

God's mercy, when as God hath cast mee off : you tell me of Christ's intercession, I have denied him, you command me to believe, I say I cannot ; you bring me no comfort ; your command is as impossible for mee to obey, as to keep the Morrall Law ; if you should persuade one to love God, with all his heart, soul, and strength, and God gives him not the power, can he performe your desire ? doth not the Church teach us to sing ; direct us, O Lord, to love thy commandemets ? hypocrites say that they love God with all their heart, but they lye ; for my part, I will not lye, but tell you plainely ; such is my case, that though you should never so much importune mee to hope or believe, though I desire it, yet I cannot : for *God (as a punishment of my wickednesse) hath taken away from me all his saving graces ; faith, hope, and all :* I am not the man therefore that you take me for ; belike you think I delight in this estate ; if I could conceive but the least sparke of hope of a better estate hereafter, I would not refuse to endure the most heavie weight of the wrath of that great God ; yea, for twentie thousand years, so that I might at length attaine to the end of that misery, which I now know will be eternall ; but I tell you, my will is wounded : who longs more to believe than I doe ? *but all the ground work of my hope is quite gone ; for if the testimonies of holy Scripture be true, (as they are most certainly true) is not this as true,* WHOSOEVER

DENIES MEE BEFORE MEN, HIM (SAITH CHRIST) WILL I DENIE BEFORE MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN ? is not this properly my case, as if it had purposely been intended against this very person of mine ? And I pray you, what shall become of such as Christ denieth, seeing there is no other name under heaven whereby you look to be saved ? What saith Saint Paul to the Hebrews ? It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, if they fal away, to be renewed to repentance : what can be more plain against me ? Is not that Scripture also, if we sinne wilfully after wee have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin ; but a certain looking for of Judgement : the Scripture speaks of me, Saint Paul means me, Saint Peter tels me, it had been better I had not knowne the way of righteousness, than after I have knowne, to turne from the holy commandment ; if it had beene better I had not known, and yet then my condemnation had bin most certaine : doe you not see evidently that *I have wilfully denied the known truth ; may justly expect not only damnation, but worse, if worse may be imagined.* God will have me undergoe the just punishment of my sin, and make mee an example of his wrath for your sakes.

“ The company present admired his discourse, so grievously accusing himselfe of his fore-past life ; so

gravely and wisely dilating concerning the judgments of God, that they then were convinced that it was not frenzie or madnesse that had possessed him ; and being, as it were, in admiration of his estate, Spira proceeded again in this manner, *Take heed to yourselves, it is no light or easie matter to be a Christian, it is not baptism, or reading of the Scriptures, or boasting of faith in Christ (though even these are good) that can prove one to be an absolute Christian : you know what I said before, there must be a conformity in life ; a Christian must bee strong, unconquerable, not carrying an obscure profession, but resolute ; expressing the image of Christ, and holding out against all opposition to the last breath : hec must give diligence by righteousness, and holinesse, to make his calling and election sure : many there are that snatch at the promises in the gospel, as if they undoubtedly did belong to them, and yet they remain sluggish, and carelesse, and being flattered by the things of this present world, they passe in their course in quietnesse and security ; as if they were the onely happy men ; whom nevertheless the Lord in his providence hath ordained to eternal wrath ; as you may see in Saint Luke's rich man, thus it was with mee, therefore take heed."**

"Thus spoke he, the teares all the while trickling down ; *professing that his pangs were such, as that*

* Relation, pp 136-151.

*the damned wights in hell endure not the like miserie.**

. . . . And finding no ease, or rest, even and anon cried out, ‘O miserable wretch ; O miserable wretch ;’ then turning to the Company, hee besought them in this manner,—

“ ‘Oh Brethren, take a diligent heed to your life : make more account of the gifts of God’s Spirit than I have done, learne to beware my misery, think not you are assured Christians, because you understand something of the gospel ; take heed you grow not secure on that ground ; be constant and immoveable in the maintenance of your profession : confess even untill death if you be called thereto ; he that loveth father, mother, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, kindred, houses, lands, more than Christ, is not worthie of him.”†

“Then turning himselfe to certain young men that were present, he desired them to conceive him aright : ‘*I doe not speak this, to derogate from the certaintie of saving faith, and the promises of the Gospel, for they are most sure ; but take heed of relying on that FAYTH THAT WORKES NOT A HOLY AND UNBLAMEABLE LIFE WORTHY OF A BELIEVER ; credit me, it will faile, I have tried it ;* I presumed I had gotten the right faith, I preached it to others, I had all places of Scripture in memorie, that might support it ; I thought myselfe sure, and in the mean time, living

* Relation, p. 157.

† Ibid. pp. 158-160.

impiously, and carelessly, behold, now the judgements of God have overtaken me, not to correction, but to condemnation ; and now you would have one to believe, but it will not bee : for *I feel too late, that good things belong only to such as are good : whose sinnes are covered with Christ's death and blood, as with a vaill, and guarded with his righteous merits from the flood of God's wrath, even as with a mighty wall ; lest miserable mortals should bee swallowed up with the greatness of their sinnes ;* BUT AS FOR ME, I HAVE AS IT WERE, WILFULLY WITH MINE HANDS PULLED DOWN THIS RAMPIRE, BEHIND WHICH I MIGHT HAVE RESTED IN SAFETIE ; AND NOW ARE THE SWELLING WATERS COME EVEN TO MY SOULE ; AND I AM CAST AWAY.' ”*

We cannot go through, as Bunyan has it, “all the rest of his actions in his dolours, as his tears, his prayers, his gnashing of teeth, his wringing of hands, his twisting, and languishing, and pining away under that mighty hand of God that was upon him ”† suffice it to say, that “hee lay about eight weeks in this case, in a continuall burning, neither desiring, nor receiving anything but by force, and that without digestion, so spent that hee appeared a perfect Anatomie, expressing to the view, nothing but sinewes and bones ; vehemently raging for drinke ; ever pining, yet fearefull to live long ;

* Relation, pp. 161-165. † *Vide* Grace Abounding.

dreadfull of hell, yet coveting death ; in a continual torment, yet his own tormentour ; and thus consuming himselfe with grief, and horreur, impatience, and despair ; like a living man in hell, hee represented an extraordinary example of the justice and power of God : and thus (as farre as appeareth) within a few dayes after his arrival at his own home, he departed this present life. Yet an occasion to make us remember, that secret things belong unto the Lord our God ; but charitie to man, to teach him to hope all things.”*

One modern instance must suffice. It is extracted from a narrative by the Rev. Hubbard Winslow of America.

“ A young man left his father’s house in the country, at the age of fifteen. He had a pious mother, and *had been the subject of early religious instructions and impressions.* After he began to reside in the city, according to his parents’ directions, he attended for a while upon the faithful preaching of the gospel, and was of hopeful habits. He, however, kept himself aloof from the more personal and special means of religion, yet still believing it to be important, and designing to attend to it at a future time. He formed an acquaintance with associates less favourable to piety, with whom his feelings gradually learned to sympathize. He

* Relation, pp. 175-177.

went on in this way for four or five years without much obvious change, *though he was, of course, resisting convictions, hardening his heart, grieving the Spirit of God, and laying the foundation for his moral ruin.* He often received letters from his mother, reminding him of his duty, and urging him to it ; over some of which he was constrained to drop a tear, and make good resolutions.

“ But the way of his heart was backward from God. Every month hardened him the more in impiety. He at length began to visit rather freely the theatre, and other dissipating amusements and pleasures. His place in the house of God was sometimes vacated, especially in the afternoon, and he was scarcely ever at the evening religious lectures. His mother’s letters he read with less attention than formerly ; for he had begun to suppose himself a young man of some consequence, quite competent to think and judge for himself, without her assistance : he thought, indeed, she was a kind and good mother, but that she did not know so much about the customs of the city, and what was most becoming a young man in his situation, as himself.

“ About this time he fell in with some sceptical writings. He at first hesitated as to reading them ; but as he had attended infidel meetings once or twice without experiencing any harm, he thought there could be no danger in just seeing what its

writers had to say, especially as it was his principle to examine all sides. *He first read, then doubted, then began to be more wise than all his teachers ; and at length slid quite over into the yawning gulf !* His seat in the house of God, at first only occasionally deserted, was at length quite forsaken.

“ He was now quite prepared for more desperate steps. He lost his situation from certain irregularities and vices ; and all know how difficult it is for a young man to obtain a second place, when the first is forfeited by improper conduct. He, at length, succeeded in finding employment, but it was not such as he had lost. It was a much humbler and more menial condition to which he found himself reduced. His ambition was broken down ; he was mortified and discouraged. This subjected him still more to the power of the baser motives. To these he continued to yield more and more ; losing of course what remained of self-respect, and falling under those severe lashes of self-reproach which, if they do not bring to repentance, drive to more desperate lengths in sin.

“ I will not detail the sad particulars respecting his subsequent course for four or five years. After several fruitless attempts to retrieve his circumstances, he changed his place of residence, hoping to do better. But his character and habits went with him. For five years he did not write a single letter to his parents, and, according to his state-

ment, they did not know anything of him ; although they were most of the time only a hundred and fifty miles distant. But he had determined that neither they nor any of his former acquaintances should know where he was, or what he was doing.

“ He attempted to act upon the stage, but could not succeed. He even undertook to be a juggler, but soon found it quite out of his province. He began to gamble ; but usually lost when he had anything to lose. How he obtained the means of subsistence during his years of profligacy, they can tell who are acquainted with that manner of life better than I can. He wandered from place to place, prodigal, reckless, forlorn, rapidly wasting his health, till at length he was reduced to the condition in which I first saw him.

“ One day an individual applied to me, and said, ‘ There is a young man at my house, whom I am desirous that you should visit. We took him in some three or four weeks since, out of charity ; for he is destitute, homeless, and sick ; although he is a young man of respectable manners, and appears to have seen better days. But we cannot get much out of him. He is not inclined to talk. The physician thinks that he is in a fixed and rapid consumption. He has a wasting cough, with night sweats, seems to be very much dejected, says but little, and is at times apparently in very great distress of mind. I asked him if he was willing to

see a minister, or some other Christian friend : he at first refused ; but has since consented.’

“ I of course took an early opportunity to visit him, and found his condition even worse than had been represented. It presented a wan, ghastly countenance, a sunken eye, a hollow voice, as from the tomb, an expression of intolerable anxiety upon his countenance, everything indicating extreme wretchedness, and an opening grave. He was at first disinclined to converse ; he seemed to be completely reserved, and no efforts could draw him forth. I addressed a few words to him, such as I thought best calculated to lead his thoughts to the Saviour, and, with his permission, offered a short prayer. On retiring, I asked him if he would like to have me call again ; he assented.

“ Soon after I renewed the visit. He was lying in bed, and had just recovered from a severe paroxysm of coughing. After a short time, he beckoned me to him, and, with a low voice, said he should like to see me alone for a few moments. The nurse and lady of the house, who were present, left the room. When we were alone, he fixed his eyes upon me in silence. There seemed to be a conflict in his mind, whether to speak or refrain. At length his struggling spirit burst its enclosure, and he began to tell something of his history.

“ He was now in his **twenty-sixth year**. For nearly five years he had been, as he supposed, a

confirmed infidel. He had become an alien from his parents, they did not even know where he was, nor was he willing that they should. *He felt that he had ruined himself. He saw clearly where the work of ruin commenced ; it was in his resisting his early convictions of truth and duty.* His father was not a godly man ; but his mother was pious, and, he had no doubt, she had wept rivers of tears over him.

“ After a gust of emotion, which for a moment suspended his utterance, he proceeded : ‘ *It was not infidelity that ruined him ; the procuring cause of his ruin lay farther back.* IT WAS HIS RESISTING THE ADMONITIONS OF GOD, AND THE STRIVING OF HIS SPIRIT, THAT MADE HIM AN INFIDEL ; but his infidelity had served to plunge him into more open and desperate iniquities. Since he had embraced infidelity, he had committed vices at which his earlier youth would have shuddered : fraud, gambling, drunkenness, seduction ; he had led others into the same vices.

“ ‘ But these,’ continued he, ‘ are only the warts and excrescences of my ruined character, the ruin itself is deep in the soul, and the misery with which it is overtaken here is only premonitory of the everlasting misery which awaits it beyond the grave. For several years I have tried to disbelieve the Bible. I have succeeded. I have been a confirmed infidel. More than that, I have been an atheist.

I used to hear it said that no man could be really an atheist ; but I know to the contrary. I have been an atheist. *I have perfectly and fatally succeeded in being given over to a strong delusion to believe a lie, that I might be damned, because I obeyed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* But I am no longer an atheist, I am convinced that there is a God. I feel, I know that I am an accountable being ; and that a righteous judgment awaits me in eternity !'

" After a moment's rest, his countenance gathering more intensity of expression, he added, with increased energy, ' But the most terrible thing to reflect on is, that I have not only ruined myself, but have been the cause of leading others to ruin. Oh, I am sure that the everlasting execration of ruined souls must follow me into eternity ! Oh that I had never been born, or had sunk into death upon my mother's arms.'

" I here endeavoured to cast oil upon the rising waves of emotion, and to calm his tempestuous spirit, by reminding him of the great mercy and forgiveness there is in God. ' No,' replied he, '*not for me, I cannot be forgiven, and I CANNOT REPENT, MY DAY OF GRACE IS ALL OVER.* But I feel greatly relieved since I have told you my story, I am glad you came, sir, wretched as I am, this is the best moment I have seen for a long time.' I have hitherto kept all this to myself, it has been as a fire shut

up in my breast, *I have not known one hour of peace since I left the paths of virtue, and for two or three years I have been perfectly wretched. I have often been upon the point of committing suicide.*'

"After a few words intended to direct his mind to the source of hope, I left him promising to see him again the next morning, if he should survive till then. He did survive—the morning came, but it was no morning to him. The sweet rays of the rising sun shot no kindling gleam of hope into his dark and troubled soul. I had hoped, I had almost expected, to find it otherwise.

"I have somewhat doubted in regard to the expediency of relating his expressions the next morning, but as I have undertaken to report the facts as they were, I do not know that I should do right to withhold a part of them, especially as he had not only permitted but requested me to admonish all others by his example, if peradventure he might serve as a beacon to warn them off from the vortex into which he had been drawn. He had no longer any wish to conceal anything; he seemed rather to wish to proclaim his wretchedness to the world. He was dead to hope, and alive to despair, with recollections of his past life, an awakened conscience, eternity full in view but a step before him, and every gleam of hope excluded. Oh it was indeed a painful illustration of the inspired truth, that 'some

men's sins are open before hand, going before to judgment.'

"The following conversation took place on the occasion now referred to :—

" 'How do you do, my friend, this morning.'

" '*As miserable as sin and wrath can make me !*'

" This he said with an emphasis which surprised and startled me.

" 'And did you obtain no rest last night ?'

" '*Not a moment's rest ; my soul has been in perfect misery !*'

" 'But you are excited ; your body is diseased, and your mind is weak and morbid. You ought to endeavour to compose yourself to rest, to become calm, and to look to that source of forgiveness and mercy which is still open to you, if you repent and believe.'

" 'No, no, it is impossible ! I cannot compose myself, I cannot be calm, my body is well enough, but *my soul has been in hell all night !* I have denied that there is a hell : I have scoffed at it ; I have induced others to do the same, and now God is convincing me of my error. Oh, I know now that there is a hell ; I feel it in my own spirit. I am glad that you have come to see me, that I may tell you how miserable I am. This is the only relief I can get. You are the first person to whom I have ventured to make known my misery. I have for a

long time kept it to myself ; but I can no longer conceal it.'

“ ‘ It is well for you to acknowledge your sins. But you should confess to God, as well as to your fellow-men. He has said, “ acknowledge thy transgressions ;” and moreover, “ He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy.” ’

“ ‘ No, no, I cannot approach God, I cannot meet him, I cannot ! Oh that the same grave which will soon bury my body, could bury my soul with it, oh that I might be annihilated ! this is what I have long hoped for and expected ; but this hope has failed me. I never before realised the meaning of that scripture, “ when a wicked man dieth, his expectations shall perish.” All my expectations have perished. I have been for some time reviewing my past life, and during the last night, *that passage kept passing like a burning arrow through my spirit*, “ rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” Yes, I have walked in the way of my heart, and in the sight of my eyes, and now God is bringing me into judgment. The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit. You can pray for me, but it is of no use. You are very kind ; the family here are very kind ; *I thank you all, but you*

cannot save me. MY SOUL IS DAMNED ! the seal of reprobation is already upon me !

“ These last were precisely his words ; and they were uttered with a pathos, a sort of calm, fixed, significant earnestness, which almost overcome us. I can never forget his expression, when he fixed his dark, restless, glassy eyes upon us and uttered these last words. Perceiving it in vain to say any thing more to him while in that state we withdrew, that he might, if possible, be composed to rest.

“ The next day I called again to see him, and found him dying. His power of utterance had almost failed. I took hold of his hand, and told him it would afford us great relief to know that he left the world reconciled to God, and trusting in the Saviour’s grace. His only reply was, and they were the last words I heard him utter, ‘ if the grave would bury my soul with my body, I should consider it my best friend, that would be immeasurably better for me than my present condition, or anything I have a right to expect.’ After again commending him in a short prayer to the mercy of God I was obliged to leave him. In about an hour afterwards he died.”

These fearful instances of God’s avenging hand fall strictly within the compass of this awful passage of Scripture. No doubt many enlightened unbelievers, who have, after a brief but fruitless and inglorious profession, apostatized from Christ, and have never

been restored, have died pretty much as they have lived, without "hope and without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12) ; but yet without exhibiting in themselves any particular manifestation of God's wrath against them for their sin. Their "judgment" has seemed to "linger," and their "damnation" to "slumber" (2 Pet. ii. 3) ; although this will in the end only make it the more intolerable and awful.

God sometimes, however, as it were, steps out of his way to execute judgment upon a hardened reprobate, or to inflict summary punishment upon one who has more than ordinarily braved his justice ; but it is as much for the benefit of others, as for the punishment of the transgressor himself. "Suppose ye," said our Lord, "that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things ? I tell you, Nay : but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 2, 3). "Extraordinary examples of Divine Justice," says the English Editor of the *Relation*, from which we have before so largely quoted, "God never intended for a nine dayes wonder : else would hee when he exemplified Lot's wife have turned her into a statue of melting snow, not of lasting salt ; which stood, as Josephus tells us, till his age, after the destruction of Jerusalem : and as some travellers report, till at this day (A. D. 1638) : *ut quoddam hominibus præstaret condimentum quo sapiant unde*

illud caveatur exemplum (*Aug. de Civit. Dei. Lib. 16, c. 30*) ; for a season against corruption, a preservative against Apostacie.* This was remarkably so with the case of Spira, which was not only “the conversion and confirmation of sundry worthies” in his time, including the before-mentioned Vergerius, who “forsaking a rich bishopricke of Justinopolis, and tents of Antichrist, went to Basil, and dyed a worthy Protestant ;”† but has likewise, by means of its relation, been blessed to the quickening of many souls in after ages. May it have this blessed effect again.

We must conclude our observations upon the passage of Scripture which we have been considering, with some reflections upon the subject, of a practical character, without which it could scarcely be said to be complete ; and for greater clearness and perspicuity we shall address them to different classes of persons.

Let us address a few words, in the first instance, to the unconverted generally.

What effect has the reading of these pages had upon you, dear fellow-sinners ? Have these “ words seemed to you as idle tales” which you “believe not”

* Relation, pp. 178, 179.

- † Relation, p. 180.

(Luke xxiv. 11) ; or the subject one of a doubtful, curious, or speculative character, with which you have no concern ? If so, we fear you have never been awakened to a sense of your position as sinners in the sight of God. You have never had any right perceptions of your obnoxiousness to God's justice on account of sin. If you know nothing of what it is to be "enlightened," to "have tasted of the heavenly gift," to have been "made a partaker of the Holy Ghost," to have "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," then it is manifest that, however clear your "understanding" may be in *other* respects, yet in *this* respect it is "darkened ;" however alive you may be to the world, and to the things of the world, yet you are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in you, because of the blindness of your heart" (Eph. iv. 18). You "walk according to the course of this world" (Eph. ii. 2), and you are therefore "dead in trespasses and sins" (ver. 1). You "fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind ; and are," therefore,—for *all* are "*by nature*—the children of wrath, even as others" (ver. 3). You are yet "in the flesh," and therefore you "cannot please God" (Rom. viii. 8) : "because the carnal mind is enmity against God : for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (ver. 7).

Then you are under the power of death eternal, because "to be carnally minded (*i. e.* unconverted)

is death" (ver. 6). You are "under the law," and not "under grace" (Rom. vi. 14), and therefore *you are under the curse of that law*, "for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is *every one* that continueth not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. iii. 10). For that "law" is "holy, and just, and good" (Rom. vii. 12), and reaches to the mind and heart and soul, as we are told in many passages of Scripture, and as our Saviour himself teaches us in his sermon on the mount; and indeed as he assured us in so many words when he said in reply to one who asked him, "Which was the great commandment in the law? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. xxii. 36-40). And by nature you are unholy—and unjust—and bad. "For we have before proved," says St Paul, "both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is *none* righteous, *no, not one*: there is *none* that understandeth, there is *none* that seeketh after God. They are *all* gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is *none that doeth good, no, not one*" (Rom. iii. 9-12). And you have broken that law times

without number. For "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. xvii. 9); and "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart are only evil continually" (Gen. vi. 5).

Moreover you are *under the dominion of Satan*, and are led "captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. ii. 26). The "strong man armed keepeth his palace," your heart, and he is holding "his goods in peace" (Luke xi. 21). He is using you as an instrument in his service, and you are unconsciously working out his plans. You are on the side of the Philistines, and are fighting against "the armies of the living God." O the desperate misery and wretchedness of the unenlightened, unconverted heart! But it is not seen, nor felt, until that day when God "opens its eyes," in order that he may "turn it from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that it may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in" Christ Jesus (Acts xxvi. 18).

But will you remain in this wretched condition? Surely, surely not. Would you ask then, what we would have you to do? We reply, "Flee from the wrath to come" (Matt. iii. 7; Luke iii. 7). "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark i. 15). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31). Would you inquire again, What the gospel is, and how you are to become a partaker of its blessedness? We will tell

.

you. The gospel is the revelation of God's mercy to mankind through Christ, and we are made partakers of its blessedness by receiving Christ Jesus into our hearts by faith. Let us endeavour to shew this more fully from Scripture.

The Lord God being infinitely holy (Psa. xxii. 3, cxlv. 17 ; Isa. vi. 3 ; John xvii. 11 ; Rev. iv. 8)—so holy, indeed, that he is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity” (Hab. i. 13), *i. e.* with the least possible conceivable degree of complacency ; and being likewise eternally and infinitely just (Deut. xxxii. 4 ; Zech. ix. 9 ; James v. 6 ; 1 Pet. iii. 18)—so just, indeed, that the non-punishment of transgression would be a violation of his character and attributes, a thing of course utterly impossible ; it follows, as a natural consequence, from these truths, that unless the infinite wisdom of God had devised, the infinite love of God had executed, and the infinite mercy of God had applied, a redemption to fallen creatures—creatures who had once, even in thought and heart, broken away from their allegiance to him—there could not by possibility have been any salvation for them : but they must for ever have remained excluded from the presence and favour of that being who is the source of all light, and life, and happiness. Such a salvation, and such a redemption, is to be found in the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Man as a sinner is *guilty*. As a sinner likewise he

is *unholy*. Provision for his necessities, in each of these respects, is to be found in the gospel. Through the satisfaction made to the divine justice, by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus, the believer in him is made just. Through the communication of God's Holy Spirit to him, on his believing reception of the atonement, he is made holy. Justification is *one* act. Sanctification is a *progressive* act. Justification delivers him from the *guilt* of sin. Sanctification frees him from the *power* and *filthiness* of sin.

This is the gospel scheme of salvation : when man was condemned to death eternal in consequence of his violation of the holy law of God (Gen. ii. 17 ; Rom. v. 12-19, vi. 23 ; 1 Cor. xv. 56 ; James i. 15), it was said, " Deliver him from going down to the pit : I have found a ransom " (Job xxxiii. 24). In the council of the eternal Trinity, long before the world was, it was predetermined and fore-ordained that Jehovah Jesus, the second person in the Godhead, should take upon him man's nature, and die for man's sin (Eph. i. 4, iii. 9, 11 ; 2 Tim. i. 9, 10 ; Titus i. 2 ; 1 Pet. i. 19, 20 ; Rev. xiii. 8). So, " when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons " (Gal. iv. 4, 5). The union of the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ, and his death

upon the cross, with the outpouring of God's Spirit, accomplishes all that is required in the economy of man's salvation. It exalts the divine majesty and glory, it vindicates the divine sovereignty, it satisfies offended justice, "it magnifies the law, and makes it honourable" (Isa. xlii. 21); it exhibits God as "a just God" and yet "a Saviour" (Isa. xlv. 21). The union of these two natures—the Godhead and the manhood—in one Christ is so intimate and complete, that what is predicated in Scripture of one nature is sometimes predicated likewise of the other; although the acts of each nature are of course distinct. Thus the Son of Man is said to have "come down from heaven," and actually to "be in heaven" (John iii. 13); although as man he had not then been there, and as God he "fillethe heaven and earth" (Jer. xxiii. 24); and, speaking reverently, therefore is incapable of motion. Again, the blood of the *man* Christ Jesus is called *the blood of God* (Acts xx. 28) for the same reason; although as God he is of course "a Spirit" (John iv. 24), and "a Spirit hath not flesh and bones," said our Lord, "as ye see me have" (Luke xxiv. 39). From these facts, however, result these stupendous truths, that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross for man's breach of God's law, was as if *God himself* had died for the vindication of his own law. Die you, O sinners! under the curse of God's law, or justice must! Marvellous and all-glo-

rious truth ! here is justice, if we may so speak, dying in vindication of his own law !

Again, what our Lord Jesus did, he did, not for *himself*, but for *others*. He put himself *in the place of the sinner*, and *suffered in his stead*. He took upon him *man's* nature, in order that man might partake of *his*. He took man's nature, as it was fallen, and liable to all the *consequences* of sin ; but yet, so far as *he* was concerned, wholly free from sin itself. (2 Cor. v. 21 ; Heb. iv. 15 ; 1 Pet. ii. 22 ; 1 John iii. 5.) “ And being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ” (Phil. ii. 8). Did the law of God demand a perfect righteousness ? (Matt. xxii. 37). Our Lord fulfilled its requirements for man to the very letter. (Psa. xl. 8, compared with Heb. x. 5-10 ; Rom. v. 19.) Did it annex the penalty of death eternal, or “ the curse ” to the slightest deviation from its requirements ? (Gal. iii. 10). “ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ” (Gal. iii. 13). Everything that God had required us to do, Christ has done for us. Every punishment that God had denounced upon us, Christ has suffered for us. “ He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him ” (2 Cor. v. 21).

And now, how are we made partakers of this blessedness ? By faith in the Lord Jesus ; *i. e.* by

believing that he did and suffered these things for us, and that he freely offers them to us for our acceptance in the gospel. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 3) : *i. e.* "his faith was counted for righteousness" (ver. 5). "Now, it was not written for his sake alone," says the apostle, "that it was imputed to him ; but for us also, to whom it (*i. e.* faith) shall be imputed (*i. e.* for righteousness), if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead ; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Ver. 23-25). That is to say, God in his infinite mercy has been pleased to ordain, since fallen man has no righteousness of his own, all man's "righteousness being as filthy rags" in God's sight (Isa. lxiv. 6), that, in consequence of the obedience and death of his beloved Son, he will accept man's faith in his merits and death—by faith, meaning his belief in what Christ did and suffered, as having been done and suffered *for him*, and freely offered to him in the gospel—in *the stead of righteousness*, and will *through or by means of that faith impute Christ's righteousness and the benefit of his death to that believer himself, as much so as if he himself had performed it.* So that when a man really believes in Christ, what Christ did and suffered is reckoned as if *he* had done and suffered it. When *Christ* fulfilled the law, *he* fulfilled the law (Rom. v. 19,

x. 4). When *Christ* died under the curse of the law, *he* died under the curse of the law (Rom. v. 6, 8 ; 2 Cor. v. 14). When *Christ* rose from the dead, *he* rose from the dead (Col. ii. 12, iii. 1). Now where *Christ* sits in heavenly places, *he* "sits in heavenly places" (Eph. ii. 6). "When *Christ*, who is our life, shall appear, then shall" *he* "also appear with him in glory" (Col. iii. 4). "Beloved, now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John iii. 2). "At that day," said our Lord to his disciples, "ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John xiv. 20). "Neither pray I for these alone," said he to his Father, "but for them also which shall believe on me through their word ; that they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us : that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John xvii. 20, 21).

This is the gospel : and this it is to be made a partaker of it ; but since man is so very far gone from original righteousness, that he cannot repent and turn to God, and "do works meet for repentance" of his own free will, God has made further provision for his requirements in this particular. "The religion of a sinner," an eminent divine once said, "stands on two pillars ; namely, what *Christ did for us* in his flesh, and what he *performs in us*

by his spirit.”* The former respects the *justification* of the sinner from the *guilt* of his sin ; the latter respects the *sanctification* of the sinner from the *filth* and *power* of his sin. Both are necessary. Our guilt must be purged away by the blood of Jesus : our sinful hearts must be purified by his Holy Spirit. Hence the further provision God has made in the gospel to insure the application of the remedy provided, is the communication of his Holy Spirit. “ Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh (and nothing more), and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John iii. 5, 6) ; and is manifested as such (1 John iii. 9, 10) ; *i. e.* by bringing forth “ the fruits of the Spirit” (Gal. v. 22), and in no other way ; “ for if ye know that he (Christ) is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him” (1 John ii. 29). The Spirit of God pleads with the sinner, and urges him to accept the proffered mercy ; sometimes gently, sometimes powerfully, sometimes alarmingly. O, sinner, is he not pleading with you now, as you read these very pages ? But the sinner, alas ! but too frequently turns a deaf ear to his solicitations. “ But they refused to hearken,” this implies his calling to them ; “ and pulled away the shoulder,” this

* Newton's Remarks.

implies his laying his hands upon them : “ and stopped their ears,” this implies his calling after them with a loud voice ; “ that they should not hear ” (Zech. vii. 11). Thank God, however, all are not thus obstinate ; but some listen, and believe, and are saved.

“It would be beyond our present purpose to shew at length how the Holy Spirit effects this blessed work, and we will therefore content ourselves, in this instance, with a simple reference to a passage in the 16th chapter of St John, where our Saviour is instructing his disciples upon the work of the Spirit in the soul of man. His office, he says, is first ‘ to reprove,’ or *convince* the soul of sin (ver. 8), (which he does by applying the *spirituality* of the law of God to the conscience, ‘ for I was alive without the law once (said Paul), but when the commandment came (in its spirituality and its power, Rom. vii. 12), sin revived, and I died’ (Rom. vii. 9); and especially, of the sin of not believing in Christ (ver. 9), the sin of unbelief, and the guilt of rejecting the promised Saviour. Having thus laid bare the heart of the sinner to himself, and shewn him his true position in the sight of God, and taken away from him his false hope and his false confidence, preparatory to the impartation to him of ‘ a good hope through grace’ (2 Thess. ii. 16), ‘ a hope that maketh not ashamed’ (Rom. v. 5) ; he next takes of the things of Christ and shews them unto

him (John xvi. 14, 15); he 'reveals' Christ to the spirit (Gal. i. 15, 16), as its 'wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption' (1 Cor. i. 30). The soul then closes with Christ, and receives him, and believes in him, 'the seed of eternal life is sown in his heart,' his life is hid with Christ in God' (Col. iii. 3); and the Spirit who sanctifieth him draws him daily nearer and nearer to Christ, 'without whom he can do nothing' (John xv. 5), gives him power over his corruptions, and finally perfects the 'good work' he had begun in him (Phil. i. 6), and gives him complete victory over all his spiritual enemies (ver. 11)."*

This is a brief statement of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And *this salvation is offered to every human being, without exception, however sinful, however vile.* "Look unto me," says our Lord Jesus, "and be ye saved, *all the ends of the earth* : for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. xlv. 22). "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Chap. i. 18). "Ho, *every one* that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money : come ye, buy, and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price" (Isa. lvi. 1). "Go

* The Author's first Letter on the Baptismal Controversy, pp. 44, 45.

ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 15, 16). Unconverted reader! *you* have had the gospel set before you for your acceptance this day. If you accept it, and "believe" in the Lord Jesus, it will be "to the saving of your soul" (Heb. x. 39); you will be "justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses," nor by any other law (Acts xiii. 39); you will "have everlasting life" (John iii. 36); but if you reject the proffered mercy, and die an unbeliever, you will "be damned" (Mark. xvi. 16); you "will not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on you" (John iii. 36),—that is, the wrath of God which was upon you when you came into the world, by reason of your being under the law, and therefore under its curse (Gal. iii. 10), will remain upon you to all eternity, because having rejected the only Saviour from sin, you will have your sins to answer for by yourself; and being unable to save yourself from them, you will remain under the wrath of God on account of them for ever and ever. Therefore "flee" now "from the wrath to come," or the time may come when it will be "*wrath TO COME*" to *thee* FOR EVER!

Be not however deceived. When we say repent and believe the gospel, we do not mean any *intellectual assent* to the truths of the gospel. We

mean much, very much more than this. What we mean, and what Scripture means also, is *a belief of the heart itself*. "With *the heart* man believeth unto righteousness ; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 10). When that man of God, Robert Haldane, went to Geneva, some forty years ago, and instructed the students in the University there in the truths of religion ; on one occasion, reading the 5th chapter of Romans with the now celebrated author of the Reformation, Dr D'Aubigné, then a young man, with especial reference to the doctrine of original sin, which was the doctrine which seemed most impossible to him at that time ; the Doctor being intellectually convinced of the fact, replied ; " Yes, I see clearly that original sin is proclaimed in the Scriptures." " But," said Haldane, raising his hand, and pointing to the Doctor's breast, "*do you see it* IN YOUR OWN HEART." That was under God the thunderbolt which sent him to the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ. And it is the Spirit of the blessed God who alone can work such a belief in the heart. " For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh : but he is a Jew which is one *inwardly* : and circumcision is that *of the heart*, in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God " (Rom. ii. 28, 29). It is said of Christ, that " he came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as

many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name : which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of *God*" (John i. 11-13). " For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. iii. 3). " Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John iv. 13).

One word more, and we have done. The natural heart is, we know, so prone to make excuses for not believing the gospel, that we wish to follow you still further into its recesses. Perhaps you say, " Well then, if I cannot believe but under the teaching of God's Spirit ; what is the use of my trying ? Had I not better wait until he makes me ?" Oh ! you may rest assured that this objection proceeds from your " evil heart of unbelief" (Heb. iii. 12) ; and proves *how very unwilling you are* to " repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts xxvi. 20). Were you willing, were you anxious, how different would your conduct be ! Would you not be inquiring eagerly " what must I do to be saved ?" (Acts xvi. 30). How shall I become a partaker of " so great salvation ?" (Heb. ii. 3). If the man with the " withered hand," to whom our Lord said " Stretch forth thine hand," had replied, " How can I ? must not *God himself*

enable me to do so ?” Would you not at once have said, that it was quite clear that he did not *wish* to be healed ? But no ! He was but too willing, but too anxious, and “ he stretched out” his hand with all his might, and *while he did so, the Lord gave him the power*, and “ his hand was restored whole as the other” (Mark iii. 1-5). Now this is *precisely your case*. It is true that naturally you have no more power to believe, than had this man to stretch forth his hand ; but striving prayerfully, in dependence upon God’s word and promise, you will find belief in the Lord Jesus as easy as the stretching forth of this man’s hand was to him. In your own strength you can indeed do nothing, but in God’s strength you can do all things.

It is the Spirit of God, as we have said, who produces this belief in the soul. Can you not then ask God to give you his Spirit, to work this faith in you ? Oh, God is far more willing to give than you are to ask. “ If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children,” says our Lord, “ how much more shall your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit *to them that ask him* ?” (Luke xi. 13.) Can you possibly have any excuse at the day of judgment if you act not upon this word. Oh “ ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Luke xi. 9). “ Ask”—simple believing prayer—“ and it shall be given you.” You shall receive the accom-

plishment of that prayer : and in connection with this subject, oh ! what a mighty promise hath our Lord given us ; “ and *all things, whatsoever* you shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matt. xxi. 22). “ Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John xvi. 24). “ Seek”—earnest continuous prayer—“ and ye shall find”—the full fruition and satisfaction of that prayer. “ Seek for glory, and honour, and immortality” and you shall have “ eternal life” (Rom. ii. 7). “ Knock”—“ striving” (Ἀγωνίζεσθε), or agonizing, (Luke xiii. 24), wrestling prayer ; and “ it shall be opened unto you”—the full happiness and glory of prayer. The first denotes the happiness of the soul, when it first finds itself in the possession of Christ as its own, in reply to heartfelt believing prayer ; the second that growing and deepening satisfaction in his love, consequent on a fuller and more extended acquaintance with him, through earnest and long continued waiting upon him ; and the third, that “ joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet. i. 8), revealed to the soul in answer to a wrestling spirit of prayer, which, longing after the beloved object of its desires, pursues him, and holds him fast, nor “ will it let him go until he doth bless it” (Gen. xxxii. 26). Dear reader, may God grant that this experience may be yours.

And this leads us naturally, in the second place,

to address a few words of exhortation to those who are under convictions.

Dear young people,—for youth is, in general, the time of conviction and conversion ; conversion in after life is the exception, not the rule—this is indeed a critical period with you.

Perhaps the spring-morning of your young life broke softly and sweetly upon you, while your sky was clear and unclouded. The world looked bright and fair to you, and life seemed pleasant and joyous. But now, it may be, through the Lord's working on your heart through some afflictive dispensation of providence ; or through some preached or written word, sent home with power to your heart by the Spirit of God, the scene is changed. The fair and specious guise, which Satan, and your evil heart, till then unknown, had thrown over the face of a fallen world, has been, in a measure, withdrawn from it, and you have seen behind the scenes. What seemed once so fair and pleasant is now seen to be but glitter and tinsel after all. You have seen something of "the end of these things," which is "death" (Rom. vi. 21). You have seen likewise that there is a "world to come," which will live and flourish after this has been swept away into destruction. You have seen something of the hidden corruption and depravity of your own heart—how deformed you are by nature ; and the sight has humbled and distressed you. The love of the

world is, however, by no means extirpated from your spirit. Your heart still "followeth after your idols," although some of them already, it may be, lie broken at your feet. You deeply regret the blasting of your schemes of earthly joy, and are angry that your day-dream of pleasure should so soon have passed away. You are, if we may so speak, in a transition-state. You have seen a little of the world's emptiness, and of its insufficiency to supply your need ; but you have yet to see the fulness and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus. You have seen something of the evil of sin, but nothing of "the beauty of holiness" (1 Chron. xvi. 29). You have seen something likewise of the evil of your own heart, but what have you seen of the tender loving heart of the Lord Jesus ? You have seen something, it may be, of God's justice, and of your obnoxiousness to his wrath on account of sin, but you have seen nothing of the loving heart of God the Father, as revealed to us in his dear son Jesus Christ. You have yet to see the "loveliness" (Cant. v. 16), of that "fair" (Psa. xlv. 2), "exalted" one (Acts ii. 33, Phil. ii. 9), "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. ii. 5). You are, as it were, "halting between two opinions" (1 Kings xviii. 21). You are "under the law," and not "under grace" (Rom. vi. 14).

You are indeed in a critical position. May the Lord help you forward. Heaven and hell seem

trembling with you in the balance. Your danger is that, by trifling with or resisting your convictions, you may fall back again into your old course, and your "latter end" may be "worse with you than your beginning" (2 Pet. ii. 20). If you "draw back" now, unless God's special mercy prevent, it will be a "drawing back unto perdition" (Heb. x. 39). But "shall you know, if you *follow on to know* the Lord : his going forth is prepared as the morning ; and he shall come unto you as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth" (Hos. vi. 3). You shall be enlightened, and encouraged, and quickened. You shall be refreshed, and strengthened, and comforted. You shall be brought forward, held up, and established. The Spirit of the ever blessed God "shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14).

It is true you will meet with trials and tribulations ; it would be ill for you if you did not : but they shall not overcome you. Our Lord has forewarned us of these, and has likewise directed us to himself, as the subduer of them for us. "In the world," says he, "ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33). "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man : but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear

it" (1 Cor. x. 13). "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. viii. 28). Therefore, dear young people, press on ; ever "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith ; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. xii. 2). "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (ver. 3). And "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccles. ix. 10).

And oh ! resist not your convictions, but ever look up to God in prayer, to enable you to act up to them. For of all the things that you have to fear above all others, the stifling and resisting of your convictions is the greatest. Believe us, oh ! believe us, this is the most dangerous and deadly of evils. What was it that ruined Spira ? Was it not his resisting the Spirit of the living God ? What was it that ruined the young man, whose history we have before traced ? Was it not, as he himself asserted on his dying bed, his "resisting the admonitions of God, and the striving of his Spirit ?" This has been the ruin of thousands, aye of tens of thousands, and of millions ! Oh ! think

not such cautions needless ; but “seek ye the Lord *while he may be found*, call ye upon him *while he is near* : let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will *have mercy upon him* ; and to our God, for he *will abundantly pardon*” (Isa. lv. 6, 7). While you are under convictions, *the Lord may be found of you* : therefore seek him, seek him with your whole heart. While you are under convictions, *the Lord is drawing near to you* : therefore call upon him, call upon him while he is thus near ; and he will be found of you. “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (Jas. iv. 8). But oh ! if you turn a deaf ear to his entreaties, what is to become of you ! It may be that you will never have another opportunity. The Lord may never be near you again ; and then he will not be found of you again for ever. “Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me : for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord : they would

none of my counsel ; they despised all my reproof : therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices" (Prov. i. 24-31). "I am persuaded," says Bunyan, in his "Israel's Hope Encouraged," "that at the end of the world, when the damned shall see what sufficiency there is left of merit in Christ, besides what was bestowed upon them that were saved by him, they will run mad for anguish of heart, to think what fools they were, not to come to him, and trust in him that they might be saved, as their fellow-sinners did."

But we trust you will think differently. We trust you will come to the Lord Jesus, that you may be saved. Ask God to give you, and put on a bold front against the adversary. Oh ! there is nothing like decision in religion ! While persons are waverers, their troubles are increased tenfold ; but when they become fixed and decided in Christ's ways, the greater portion of their troubles vanish. Have you not often seen waverers so harassed by the importunities of their unconverted relatives and friends, to join with them in their worldly pleasures (their hearts pulling one way with them, and their consciences another against them), that they seem wearied almost out of their lives with the inward conflict ? And have you not likewise seen decided persons very soon freed from such annoyances, and spared the misery of such inward conflicts ? "Oh !

it is of no use asking such and such a person to attend this ball, or that dancing party. They never go ! I assure you it is useless." Oh what a blessed thing is decision in religion ! It honours God, and "them that honour me," says God, "I will honour" (1 Sam. ii. 30) ; and such are always blessed. If it be but a small matter, it will have its reward. It is related of the Rev. John Venn, the author of that most admirable summary of religion, "The Complete Duty of Man," that when quite a young man, while preparing for the ministry, on one occasion, while playing at cricket, a young man said to him, upon his having made a good hit, "Well struck, parson ;" whereupon he threw down his bat and refused to continue the game, and never could be prevailed upon to play again, although he was very fond of the exercise ; for fear, as he said, lest he should bring discredit upon the religion which he professed : and being thus "faithful in that which is least," he had much intrusted to him (Luke xvi. 10), and was the honoured instrument, in God's hands, above many in his own day, of that great revival of religion which took place in this country towards the end of last century.

Decision in religion leads to Christ, and issues in everlasting felicity. Hear the beautiful simile of Bunyan in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, oftener read, alas ! than acted on :—"The Interpreter took Christian by the hand, and led him into a pleasant

place, where was built a stately palace, beautiful to behold ; at the sight of which Christian was greatly delighted. He saw also, upon the top thereof, certain persons walking, who were clothed all in gold. So the Interpreter took Christian, and led him up towards the door of the palace ; and behold, at the door stood a great company of men, as desirous to go in, but durst not. There also sat a man at a little distance from the door, at a table-side, with a book and an ink-horn before him, to take the names of them that should enter therein ; he saw also that in the doorway stood many men in armour to keep it, being resolved to do to the men that would enter what hurt and mischief they could. Now was Christian somewhat in amaze : at last, when every man started back for fear of the armed men, Christian saw a man of a very stout countenance come up to the man that sat there to write, saying, Set down my name, sir ; the which when he had done, he saw the man draw his sword, and put a helmet upon his head, and rush towards the door upon the armed men, who laid upon him with deadly force ; but the man, not at all discouraged, fell to cutting and hacking most fiercely. So, after he had received and given many wounds to those who attempted to keep him out, he cut his way through them all, and pressed forward into the palace ; at which there was a pleasant voice heard from those that were within,

even of those that walked upon the top of the palace, saying,

Come in, come in ;
Eternal glory thou shalt win !

So he went in, and was clothed with such garments as they. Then Christian smiled and said, I think verily I know the meaning of this."

Would you be among that great company who stand about the door, desirous of going in, but durst not, and then knock at the last moment when "the door is shut," and find no entrance? (Matt. xxv. 10-12 ; Luke xiii. 24-27.) Then be a waverer. Or would you rather be the man of stout countenance, who fought his way valiantly through the armed men, and gained the victory? Then be fixed and decided in Christ's ways. Act up to the light you have ; and ever press onward. "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. vi. 12).

One word more, and we have done. Many young persons under convictions perplex themselves most unnecessarily with the doctrine of election ; and the devil, who before tried to make sin appear little to them, now endeavours to make it appear great—so great indeed that it is beyond God's mercy (just as if any sin, as a sin, could be beyond the infinite mercy of an infinite God) ; using the doctrine of election *against* the sinner, and falsely

endeavouring to persuade him that God has, in consequence of the greatness of his sins, elected him to reprobation. But what have *you* to do with the doctrine of election? "The godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ," it is true, "is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God" (17th article of the Church of England); but you have not arrived at this stage yet. The doctrine of election is a doctrine which God has graciously revealed for the comfort and edification of his people; but the Scriptures nowhere assert that this doctrine interferes in the least with man's responsibility as a sinner in the sight of God. On the contrary, they assert most positively that God "will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. ii. 4); that he "has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth" (Ezek. xviii. 32); and that the damnation of the sinner will be his own fault (Matt. xxiii. 37, 38; Acts xiii. 46; xviii. 6, &c).

Leave then the doctrine of election for the present, as one with which you have nothing to do.

Your duty is to “repent and believe the gospel ;” and you must be well convinced that God is sincere in pressing this home upon your conscience, for your acceptance. Oh, believe one who has been caught in this snare before you, and has been long since mercifully rescued from it, that this is a lie of Satan to keep you from coming to Christ Jesus for salvation. Oh tempest-tossed sinner ! come and rest your weary heart upon Christ’s bosom, for it can never rest elsewhere. You will never find true peace or comfort but in him. Think of the fairest scene that ever enchanted thine heart ! Think you not that he who spread it out before you, and still sustains it in its beauty, must be infinitely fairer ? Think of the loveliest being that ever broke upon thy fancy, or stole away thine heart ! Think you not that he who created her—he, “the chiefest among ten thousand” (Cant. v. 10), the “altogether lovely” (ver. 16)—is not himself infinitely more lovely ? Think of the patient, generous, strong, enduring love of woman ! Think you that he who lit the torch of that puny flame that burns to thee so brightly hath no love himself ? No ! woman’s deepest, holiest, purest love is coldness to the love of Christ—that love which “passeth knowledge” (Eph. iii. 19). You may see something of its power when he, the loveliest of all lovely beings, himself hath said : “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me ; and he

that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. x. 37). Nay, "If any man come to me, and (in comparison) hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). Oh, convinced and restless sinner; rest, rest on Christ's bosom; rest, rest, and be still.

We are thus led to address a few observations to those who have fallen away from Christ.

Unhappy creatures! What have you done? How miserably have you requited your heavenly father's kindness; slighted the love of his dear son; and grieved his Holy Spirit! You have bitterly dishonoured your God. You have "crucified to yourselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." You have "rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit" (Isa. lxiii. 10); and "done despite unto the Spirit of grace" (Heb. x. 29). Like a "dog" you "turned to your own vomit again," and as a "sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. ii. 22). And your wickedness is only equalled by your folly. You "have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed you out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. ii. 13). You have trampled upon the brightest jewel of heaven, Jesus Christ, and are now feeding upon the husks and garbage of the world. You are in yourselves living proofs of that awful

word of God, that "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead" (Eccles. ix. 3). Oh, what shall we say to you to rouse you from your present miserable and degraded position, and to induce you to seek once more the mercy of that adorable Redeemer, whom you have so deeply injured by your sins? May the blessed Spirit of God himself touch and melt your souls; for, without his all-powerful agency, no mere words of man can ever reach your hearts.

What do you propose to yourselves by your defection? Analyse your motives, and the spring of your actions, and see. A reasoning creature, one would think, would not give up one good, except for a greater—at least an *apparently* greater—good. Examine your conduct by this touchstone, and see how the case stands with you. God has, if we may so speak, at an immense expense provided a ransom for your souls. He "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). He, that Son himself, "the brightness of" the father's "glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power" (Heb. i. 3); and "who, being in the form of God," and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was

made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man," for thee, oh, backslider ! even for thee, "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 6-8). This is a humiliation unparalleled in time or eternity. It would have been impossible for any mere created being to have abased himself so far, for no created being could by possibility have occupied so lofty and exalted a position ; and considering the wretched debased creature for whom this stupendous grace was performed, it becomes an act of the most astonishing character, and one which even "the angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. i. 12). And this, O backslider, was done for you. Moreover, the blessed Spirit of God undertook to cleanse and purify this unclean and wretched creature from the filth and impurity of his sins, and with this object he came to you. He convinced you of your sins. He shewed you Jesus Christ as your only Saviour from sin. He enlightened your mind. He revealed to you something of "the powers of the world to come." He gave you a "taste of the heavenly gift, and of the good word of God ;" and with infinite condescension, he put you in the right way, and he taught you to go forward. And yet, notwithstanding all that has been done for you, you have turned your back upon God, have despised the grace and mercy of your Saviour, and have grieved the Holy Spirit. You have cast

heaven behind your back as not worth caring for, and have esteemed as of greater value the lusts and pleasures of this vain ungodly world. To your carnal heart, "the glorious Lord" (Isa. xxxiii. 21), the source of all happiness; Christ, "the king in his beauty" (ver. 17); "the Holy Ghost," "the Comforter" (John xiv. 26); and all that God "hath prepared for him that waiteth for him" (Isa. lxiv. 4), which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man," to conceive (1 Cor. ii. 9), are as nothing in your eyes compared to "the pleasures of sin," although they be but "for a season" (Heb. xi. 25); and eternal hellishness and the wrath of God follow after them.

Can this really be your solemn, deliberate choice? Are you not mad to perpetrate such awful folly? "Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" (Gal. iii. 1). Surely, you are not of those who "come and stand before" God in "his" house, which is called by "his" name, "and say, *We are delivered to do all these abominations*" (Jer. vii. 10). What! will you thus "add drunkenness to thirst" (Deut. xxix. 19), and say, as some wretched creatures have said before you: "Oh! if I am elected, it does not much matter what I do, because I shall eventually be saved after all?" What! do you

suppose that you can thus drag God at the chariot wheels of your lust? If these be your principles, then we may well despair of you, and if you are elected at all, it is to damnation (1 Pet. ii. 8, Jude 4)! Wretched creatures! Those who are elected, are elected *to holiness*, as well as to heaven: nay, they are elected to holiness in order to heaven. "Heaven," it has been well said, "*is a prepared place for a prepared people.*" Are we "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father?" It is "*unto obedience* and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 2). Hath God "chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world?" It is "*that we should be holy and without blame before him in love*" (Eph. i. 4). If it be said of those who "do evil that good may come," that their "damnation is just" (Rom. iii. 8), what shall it be said of thee, who doeth evil for evil's sake? Thou art that man who, "when he heareth the words of this curse," doth "bless himself in his heart, saying, *I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.*" Hear thou, then, the word of the Lord: "The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven" (Deut. xxix. 19, 20). O backsliding sinner! "Can thine heart endure, or

can thine hands be strong, in the day" when God "shall deal with thee?" (Ezek. xxii. 14). The time will come, and that speedily, when thou, O "sinner in Zion" shalt be "afraid;" and "fearfulness" shall "surprise" thee, O "hypocrite?" for who can "dwell with the devouring fire?" Oh who can "dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isa. xxxiii, 14). And yet, if thou repent not, thou wilt have to dwell therein for ever. "And now, whoever they be," says Rutherford, addressing those under his former ministry, "that have returned to the old vomit since my departure, I bind upon their back, in my Master's name and authority, the long-lasting, weighty vengeance and curse of God; in my Lord's name I give them a doom of black, unmixed, pure wrath, which my Master will ratify and make good, when we stand together before him, except they timeously repent (repent in time), and turn to the Lord."

But we trust you are not so far gone as this. We trust you have not yet been given over to "strong delusion," to "believe" your own "lie:" that "you might be damned," because you "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. ii. 11). No, we would hope better things of you, even "things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak" (Heb. vi. 9). We trust grace is still stirring in your heart, and that "the root of the matter" may yet be "found in you" (Job xix. 28).

But oh ! return instantly : for delay is deadly, and may be damnable. God hath largely promised *grace* : but nowhere hath he promised *time*. “Behold,” mark the word ! “behold, *now* is the accepted time ; behold, *now* is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. vi. 2). Every painful thought of thine heart at thy present unhappy position ; every obstacle that thou findest interposed between thee and thy downward course ; every warning addressed to sinners such as thou ; every word of God thou hearest is a loud call to thee to return to God immediately. Thou knowest not how soon these warnings may cease, and thou be sealed up to reprobation. This, for aught thou knowest, may be thy last. The mercy of God is indeed infinite and unfathomable ; but it is *limited as to time*, and thou knowest not *when that time expires*. “Behold !” The word to thee is “*now* !” “The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing” (1 Pet. iii. 20), “an *hundred and twenty years*,” during which time his “Spirit” “strove with man” (Gen. vi. 3) ; and although “the wickedness of man was great on the earth,” and “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (ver. 5), yet *during all that period there was mercy even for the vilest* : but the moment that period expired, the long-suffering of God was at an end, “and the flood came and destroyed them all” (Luke xvii. 27). “*Forty years* long,” likewise,

was the Lord "grieved" with the children of Israel in the wilderness, during which time they "tempted" and "provoked" him, *although they daily "saw his works."* So he at length "sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest" (Psa. xcv. 9-11). "Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith (reasoning divinely, if we may so speak, upon his own testimony), *To-day*, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (Heb. iii. 7, 8). Therefore says he, speaking through the apostle, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God" (ver. 12). Hear also our Lord's parable of the barren fig-tree. "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard : and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, *these three years* I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none : cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground ?" Awful words ! "*these three years !*" *cut it down !*" But behold the intercessor, Jesus, still pleads for thee, O backslider ! "And he, answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone *this year also*, till I shall dig about it, and dung it : and if it bear fruit, well ; *and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down*" (Luke xiii. 6-9). There is a limit even to the intercession of Christ. If thou repent and turn to God, while thy day of grace lasts, "all manner of

sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto" thee (Matt. xii. 31), "and blasphemies wherewith soever thou hast blasphemed" (Mark iii. 28); but if thou waitest till thy day of grace be over, it will be too late; "for he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation" (Mark iii. 29). We repeat once more; and oh! that the warning may sink deep into thine heart: *God hath* **LARGELY PROMISED GRACE**; *but nowhere, NOWHERE hath he promised TIME*. Therefore "return ye **NOW** every man from his evil way, and amend your doings" (Jer. xxxv. 15); and "so iniquity shall not be your ruin" (Ezek. xviii. 30).

Would you ask us how you are to return to God, and to amend your doings? We reply, Come, as you came before. Come as a convinced, wretched, polluted, undone sinner. Come as a lost, helpless, guilty, ruined, backsliding sinner. Come "with weeping and with supplications" (Jer. xxxi. 9). Come, confessing "your iniquities," which "have separated between you and your God, and your sins," which "have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. lix. 2). "When I kept silence," said the Psalmist, "my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long: for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." But when "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine ini-

quity I hid not ;” and “ I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,” then “ thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm xxxii. 3-5). Come again to Christ Jesus, to him, whom you “ have pierced” with your sins ; and “ look upon” him and “ mourn” (Zech. xii. 10). Come, casting away all extenuations of your guilt, and spreading your sins before him in all their aggravations. Plead his surpassing love, his infinite and amazing “ loving-kindness ;” “ the multitude of his tender mercies :” and he will “ blot out your transgressions” (Psa. li. 1). Plead his infinite merits, his spotless righteousness, his boundless, far-reaching, “ precious promises” (2 Pet. i. 4) ; and God who “ gathereth together the outcasts of Israel” (Psa. cxlvii. 2), will gather thee and “ bind” thy “ soul” “ in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God” (1 Sam. xxv. 29). “ Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive ; thou hast received gifts for men ; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them” (Psa. lxxviii. 18). But who are the rebellious ? Are they not those who have once declared in favour of the king, and have afterwards taken up arms against him ? And are not these the backsliders ? And are there gifts even for these, if they throw down their arms, and cry for mercy ? Yes, “ for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom. xi. 29).

Lord, thou hast won ; at length I yield ;
My heart, by mighty grace compelled,
Surrenders all to thee :
Against thy terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against thy love ?
Love conquers even me !

The amazing and inconceivable mercy of God in Christ is never so well seen as in the restoration and renewal of the soul of a miserable backslider : and God hath, as it were, commended his love to such, in that he hath foreseen their state and misery, and hath provided for it accordingly. Not only hath he granted you many precious promises, but he hath actually put the very words in your mouths by which you may return unto him. “ O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God ; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord : say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously : so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us ; we will not ride upon horses ; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods : for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy” (Hosea xiv. 1-3). While you are a backslider, you are a fatherless outcast ; for who can tell whether you belong to God or not ? But God in his infinite mercy, hath declared himself, “ the father of the fatherless” (Psa. lxviii. 5). “ Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the

Lord, and touch not the unclean thing ; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18) : "for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely : for mine anger is turned away from him" (Hosea xiv. 3, 4). "Come, and let us return unto the Lord : for he hath torn, and he will heal us ; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us : in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord : his going forth is prepared as the morning ; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth" (Chap. vi. 1-3).

Read with weeping eyes the broad covenant of thy charter. "Go and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you : for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. *Only acknowledge thine iniquity*, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord ; for I am married unto you : and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will

bring you to Zion" (Jer. iii. 12-14). Oh that thy voice may be heard responsively uttering what the tender mercy of thy God hath himself framed for thee to utter ; and sweet will those " words " be to thee, if thou " findest " them : they will be " unto thee the joy and rejoicing of thine heart " (Jer. xv. 16). " O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake : for our backslidings are many ; we have sinned against thee. O the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night ? Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save ? Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name ; leave us not " (Jer. xiv. 7-9). " I will go and return to my first husband ; for then was it better with me than now " (Hos. ii. 7). " Turn thou me, and I shall be turned ; for thou art the Lord my God " (Jer. xxxi. 18). And what doth the Lord answer thee ? " I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins : return unto me ; for I have redeemed thee " (Isa. xlv. 22). Oh well may be it said : " Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage ? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us ; he

will subdue our iniquities : and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Micah vii. 18-20).

Oh backslider ! if thou returnest to the Lord Jesus (and God, you see, would have you to do so), who will sing a louder song of praise than thou ? When thou lookest back all the way by which thou camest, and lookest forward into the unsearchable "breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii. 18, 19), thou wilt stand wondering with adoring and unutterable wonder at that love that could have borne with thee so long, that could patiently have followed, recovered, and redeemed so fearful a backslider as thou : and thou wilt then "remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more (as Newton says, "to boast, complain, or censure") because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. xvi. 63). Oh may you throw yourself at once at the foot of the cross of Christ, feel the sweet influence of sorrow for sin, while looking at him who was "pierced" for your sins, and experience the true comfort of his peace in your heart, while you hear his "sweet" voice (Cant. v. 16), "like the sound of many waters" (Rev. i. 15), saying unto thee, even unto thee :

“Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” (Matt. ix. 2).

We have lastly to address a few words of exhortation to believers, who have been kept stedfast in their “most holy faith” (Jude 20).

Dear brethren in Christ Jesus, although, in addressing you, we are aware that we shall be called presumptuous by those whose early education or prejudices have enlisted them on the side of a cold and narrow theology; yet it matters but little what man thinks, if our judgment be in accordance with the word of God; and we know who hath said, that “the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal” (1 Cor. xii. 7); and that man is answerable to *God*, and not to *man*, for his talents, and the use of them. Howbeit our observations are intended chiefly for young believers; and we can only say, in the words of holy writ, that, “he that heareth, let him hear” (Ezek. iii. 27): for “I speak as to wise men; *judge ye what I say*” (1 Cor. x. 15).

Dear “brethren, suffer,” then, “the word of exhortation” (Heb. xiii. 22), which we speak, we trust, with all humility and earnestness. Oh! what cause have you to bless God that you have thus been kept stedfast “in your most holy faith.” But has it been “by your own power or holiness” (Acts iii. 12)? surely not. It has been “by the power of God through faith” (1 Pet. i. 5). “For who made thee to differ from another? and what

hast thou that thou didst not receive" (1 Cor. iv. 7)? When the martyr Bradford beheld a criminal go by to the place of execution, he said, "But for the grace of God, there goes John Bradford." And but for the grace of God, O believer, you had fallen away from Christ, and become a miserable backslider, if not an apostate! The conclusions we would wish you to draw, therefore, from these premises, are, that it behoves you to be deeply thankful to God for his amazing mercies to you, in thus keeping you stedfast when others fell; that you ought to be more devoted to him in consequence; and that you should be more tolerant to those who have fallen; according to that which is written, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. vi. 1, 2). For "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. ii. 24-26). "And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 22, 23).

But to be more particular. Are you a timid or weak believer? Then it may be, the devil, in your dark moments, may have used this terrible passage of Scripture against you, for the vile purpose of persuading you that you had committed the unpardonable sin. No one knows, but those who have experienced it, how bitter a trial this is to a poor, weak, trembling believer; but ordinarily, we should say, that those who are in the greatest fear of having committed this sin are, in reality, the least likely to have done so. Do you fear, weak believer, that you have fallen away from Christ? Why do you think so? Because you are in darkness, and dejected in spirit? This is no sign. Many of the saints of God have been "in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps" (Psa. lxxxviii. 6); whose "God" nevertheless has been their "salvation" (ver. 1). Have you been convinced of sin, and do you *hate* sin? Do you hate *all* sin? Have you been born again, and do you love God? What are your views and feelings likewise with regard to Christ? Are you indifferent to him? Are you glad he is gone, or careless whether he ever return or not? Nay, are you not bitterly grieved at it, and do you not grievously mourn his absence? Would you not be overjoyed at the thought of his return, and think yourself the happiest being in the world, if you could but say from your heart, "My beloved is mine, and I am his?" (Cant. ii. 16.) If these things be so with

you, then you may rest assured that you have not fallen away from Christ? O! "blind man!" "be of good comfort, rise, he calleth thee" (Mark x. 49). Thou art a true believer in Christ Jesus; and "He that heareth my word," saith he, "and believeth on him that sent me, *HATH everlasting life, and shall NOT come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life*" (John v. 24). Christ hath "loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness hath he drawn thee" (Jer. xxxi. 3); and he is "able to keep you from falling" (Jude 24)—yes, "he is able to keep," and he will keep—"that which thou hast committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. i. 12); and will "present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). And "if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). You may have committed many sins, you may have provoked the Lord greatly with your unbelief, but he will save you from your sins, nay he will save you from *all* sin. What! say you, from the unpardonable sin? Yes; for *he will save you from committing it.*

But it may be profitable for you to look for a moment into the causes of your depression. How did you get into this unhappy state? Is your eye firmly fixed upon the Lord Jesus, or having looked

off from him, are you now looking into the unfathomable recesses of your dark heart? The word of exhortation says: "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us (*i. e.* unbelief, see the context), and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus*, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. xii. 1, 2). The word for looking (*ἀπορῶντες*) signifies a *looking OFF FROM*—every other object—and a *looking UP TO*—Jesus alone. Are you thus looking unto Jesus? Or having turned away your eyes from Christ Jesus, the only object of your faith, are you now looking into your own heart for something to satisfy yourself before God? If so, no wonder you are in darkness. Would you look into a dungeon for light? Would you not look up to the sun? You will never find anything in your own heart to satisfy you. You can find true peace but in Christ Jesus alone: "for he is our peace" (Eph. ii. 14). "Peace I leave with you," said he to his disciples, and through them to us, "my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John xiv. 27). We must indeed look into our own hearts that we may learn our wants, and be made acquainted with our sins; but we must not rest there. It is good indeed to know *ourselves*; but this is not all that is requisite; we must know *Christ* also. If you look into your own

evil heart, and then sink down in almost hopeless despondency, at the sight of the number and greatness of your sins, you do ill; but if you look into your own heart only to bring all your wants and sins to Christ, you do well.

This evil of looking into *one's-self* for comfort, instead of looking only to *Christ*, is deeply seated in our nature, and must be eradicated, for it springs from self-righteousness. The Psalmist frequently complains of it, and the experience of the working of his heart under such circumstances is interesting and ought to be instructive to us, for it was one of the "things" that "were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4). Let us take an instance or two. In the 13th Psalm we have a good illustration of the subject. "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" (ver. 1). God sometimes hides his face so long, you see, from a gracious soul, that it is at length apt to imagine that he has quite forgotten it,—nay, that he has cast it off for ever. "How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me" (ver. 2)? Under such circumstances, feeling sorrow and hardness of heart, and seeing the enemy exalted over it, it is apt to reason with itself, instead of going straight to God; as "if it be so, why am I

thus?" It is apt to take counsel of *itself*, instead of taking counsel of *God*. It is apt to look into itself for comfort, instead of looking up to God. It is apt to look into its own "soul" for evidences of its acceptance, instead of looking up to the Lord Jesus, and trusting to his unbounded love and promises. The consequence is that its sorrow, instead of diminishing, only increases. The heart, instead of becoming softer, only grows harder. You will never find any light, or comfort, from looking into your own heart; but you will find much sweet light, and much blessed comfort, from looking up to the Lord Jesus. "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved" (ver. 3, 4). Here we have one part of the remedy; laying the case before God himself in prayer; praying especially for light and direction. The poor soul, tired at length of the internal warfare and conflict, and in a measure convinced of its own utter emptiness, barrenness, and insufficiency, and of its total inability to help itself, betakes itself to God, to him who "said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain" (Isa. xlv. 19). Now, you see, she lays the whole case *before God* in prayer, and asks *his* judgment upon it; praying especially for light and hearing. "But I have *trusted in thy mercy*; my heart shall rejoice

in thy salvation" (ver. 5). Adopting likewise the remaining part of the remedy, an exercise of faith in God's mercy, and a hope in his salvation. And mark what a speedy answer she obtains from God upon her case. He has granted her request, and has given her even more than she asked for. She is now enabled to act faith upon the Lord Jesus and to trust in God's mercy, flowing to us in and through him ; for God's mercy can indeed flow to us in no other way. " I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me " (ver. 6). And here we have the result—a full and free deliverance, with a mouth fully opened to shew forth God's praise. And if we pursue a like course—as God, indeed, by having indited this Psalm, clearly shews that he would have us to do—it will ever be with a like result.

Take the 77th Psalm for another example of the same character, although we cannot stop to develop the teaching it contains fully. You will see, however, in reading it, that while the Psalmist, from the first to the ninth verse, pores over his empty bottle, and endeavours to find his assurance in his own heart, he experiences no comfort ; but from the latter part of the psalm you will see that the moment he goes out of himself and fixes his thoughts upon God in Christ, he regains his wonted peace : and then he sees likewise something of the reason for the way by which God has led, and still con-

tinues to lead, his people. "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known" (ver. 19). God does indeed "lead" his people "by a way that they know not" hitherto, but then he has promised to "make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight" before them. "These things," saith he, "will I do unto them, *and not forsake them*" (Isa. xlii. 16).

And this leads us to inquire, though but very briefly, into some few of the reasons of God's thus dealing with his people. When you feel as if every drop of love had been completely wrung out of your heart, and as if you were the veriest withered, empty, worthless thing in nature, do not despond : for how could you know what you were by nature if God did not permit you to be sometimes thus exercised. Take it not, then, as an evidence of God's anger towards you, but as a proof of his deep love to your soul. Two reasons we will give you why God thus exercises the spirit. One is, because we are naturally so self-righteous, that if we were not shewn how very worthless and unrighteous we are, we should most assuredly rest our salvation upon *ourselves* ; as we see every person who has not been so convinced, in one way or another, invariably does. This, then, is a prick and a goad to draw our souls out of ourselves, and to quicken them to fasten upon the righteousness of another—even the righteousness of the God-man, Christ Jesus. The second

reason is, because we are naturally so very prone to ease and spiritual slothfulness—yet a little sleep, *a little slumber*, a little folding of the hands to sleep : so shall “poverty” of soul “come as one that travelleth,” and an eternal “want as an armed man” (Prov. vi. 10, 11)—that we require constant rousings of spirit to get up and seek after God. Sometime, therefore, after God has first come to us, and “blessed us in turning us away from our iniquities” (Acts iii. 26), and comforted us (which comforts, it may be, the soul has rested in, conceiving itself in the right way, and only in the right way when it has them), he leaves us to ourselves for a season, in order that we may be made to see and feel, from individual experience, how devoid we are of strength and comfort in ourselves, and “wherein our great strength” and our real comfort “lies” (Judges xvi. 6) ; and may be stirred up to seek after him and find him, and thus be drawn nearer to him, which is the object of his withdrawing from us. Therefore, dear weak believer, whenever you feel anything at all approaching to this state, do not be discouraged, but rise up to the emergency, and let your “soul follow hard after” God, and you will find his “right hand upholding you” (Psa. lxiii. 8). The dispensation will then prove to you a blessing, and not a hurt. Temptations, says Bunyan, are like the lion which roared upon Samson, but if you overcome them, the next time you look at them

you will find a nest of honey in them. And a greater than Bunyan has said, "Now no chastening for the *present* seemeth to be *joyous* but *grievous* : nevertheless AFTERWARD it *yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness* unto them who are *exercised* thereby. Wherefore," says he, "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees ; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way ; but let it rather be healed " (Heb. xii. 11-13).

But you have thought, it may be, in your seasons of despondency chiefly of your *sorrows* and of *yourself*. It would be unkind, therefore, to dismiss this subject without giving you a word of caution on this head. You think it is your *sorrow* : well and it may be. But have you ever reflected also that it is your *sin* ? Your despondency proceeds from doubt in the power or willingness of the Lord Jesus, and doubt is unbelief, and is sinful—nay, of all sins, *in itself* the most deadly and damnable ; because final unbelief shuts men up in hopeless and irremediable ruin (Mark xvi. 16). How shocked and indignant you would be if you were charged with calling God a liar ; but your heart has done so times without number. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar (inasmuch as he has treated his testimony as if it were untrue) ; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And *this* is the record, that *God hath given*

to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John v. 10-11). Have you ever disbelieved in your heart that God hath given to you eternal life, and that this life is in his Son? Then have you charged God in your heart with being a liar! Think you this is your *sorrow only*? Is it not *also* your grievous, your *very grievous sin*? Oh! the desperate wickedness that there is in "an EVIL heart of *unbelief*," which "departeth from the living God" (Heb. iii. 12)! As you have but too frequently looked at it, therefore, in the light of your *sorrow*, look at it now in the light of your *sin*: and pray against it, and pray for its opposite—faith; and you will be helped over it, and will prosper. Then Christ will come again to you, and will "stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Pet. v. 10). Now, it may be, you have often thought in your unbelieving heart, "Ah! if Christ were infinite love, would he leave me thus? Would he not come to me? Would he not comfort me?" Poor silly soul! do you not know that Christ is *infinite wisdom*, as well as *infinite love*? He had not need deal with thee according to thy foolish measures. When thou art ready for comfort, he will give it thee, not before. Now thou wantest *faith*; and faith is exercised by *absence*, and by *conflict*. Pray for it, and strive after it; and thou shalt obtain it. Oh! for that mighty faith, which, clinging to omnipotence, conquers this world (1 John v. 4); purifies the heart (Acts xv. 9); works by love (Gal.

v. 6); and fulfils all righteousness (Matt. iii. 15). The Lord grant his people more and more of it.

But thou must be up and doing, for “if thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustest, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan” (Jer. xii. 5)? Some of God’s own people, even in their last moments, have had no comfort, and yet have they not doubted his love to them; and wilt thou doubt? It is recorded of the excellent Gillespie, who was one of the learned Selden’s opponents at the Westminster Assembly in 1643, that during his last illness he enjoyed little comfort, but was strong in the faith of adherence to the divine promises—a subject on which he insisted much in his sermons. When asked if he had any comfort, he said, “No; but though the Lord allow me no comfort, yet I will believe that my beloved is mine, and I am his.”* Was he right to do so? Assuredly he was; for although it would be presumption to rely upon election itself, independent of evidence, yet it would be manifestly sinful not to rely upon the divine promises. We do not say, then, rely upon your *election*, but rely upon *Christ* and his *promises* to you in the gospel. We are told we are to be “*confident* of this very thing,

* *Vide* notices prefixed to Bonar’s edition of Rutherford’s *Letters*, p. 266.

that he which *hath begun* a good work in you *will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*" (Phil. i. 6). "These things have I written unto you," saith the apostle John, "that believe in the name of the Son of God ; *that ye may know that ye have eternal life*, and that ye may believe (*i. e.* continue to believe) on the name of the Son of God" (1 John v. 13): "for he hath said, *I will NEVER leave thee, nor forsake thee*. So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. xiii. 5, 6). "My sheep" says Christ, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me : and I give unto them *eternal life* ; and they shall *never* perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John x. 27, 28). We are told that "God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath : that by two immutable things (*i. e.* the promise and the oath of God), in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us : which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil ; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. vi. 17-20). O weak trembling believer ! rise up to the height of your amazing pri-

vileges, and plead this mighty promise with your Lord, and prevail: "And *all things*, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive" (Matt. xxi. 22).

But we must hasten onwards. Let us give you, then, some few hints, which may serve as preservatives from apostasy.

In the first place, dread leaving your first love ; remembering that it is at all times easy to fall away from Christ, but always difficult to return to him. In a measure your walk (if we may so speak) is in your own hands : for when Christ upbraided "the church of Ephesus," "because it had left its first love," bidding it "remember therefore from whence it had fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Rev. ii. 1, 4, 5) ; he not only charges this upon it as its sin, but his language necessarily implies that it might have avoided this sin if it would. Dread therefore the first approaches to lukewarmness and indifference to Christ, as you would dread the plague itself. It is true that in many of your approaches to Christ in prayer, you may have occasion to mourn over much deadness, and lukewarmness, and emptiness ; and you may often return from prayer empty and discouraged : but this is not what is meant. No, it is indifference and carelessness to Christ, which affects you not, that is intended. Downcastings, and sense of deadness, and emptiness, mourned over, are sometimes much better for the

soul than comfort, for this is but too often rested in instead of Christ, and begets self-complacency ; while the former humbles, and drives the soul nearer to the Lord who bought it. Did not our dear Lord himself say, "Blessed are they which do *hunger and thirst* after righteousness" (Matt. v. 6) ? But *hungering and thirsting* are *longing, painful* feelings, which imply *emptiness* and an aching *void*. And is not this sometimes thy feeling after prayer ? Cheer up then, for the Lord says that thou art "*blessed,*" aye, and "*shalt be FILLED*" (Matt. v. 6) "For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Psalm cvii. 9).

In the second place, ever act up to the light you have ; never go against the dictates of your conscience ; and take care that sins which have been discovered, and are known to you, be forsaken ; and in God's strength determine to forsake *all* sin. "Esteem" God's "precepts concerning all things to be right ;" and "hate *every* false way" (Psa. cxix. 128) : for you may rest assured that nothing blinds, or hardens the heart more surely, or more securely, than acting against light, or allowing known and discovered sins to lie in the heart without being forsaken. And for the purpose of discovering your sin, exercise an habitual spirit of self-examination in the sight of God, with prayer for his illumination, using his word, of course, as the grand means under the teaching of his Spirit, for that purpose ;

man's works, and men themselves, as secondary means. Thus, when you have discovered anything, note it down for use ; and when you see sin in others, use them as a glass, and turn your eyes inwardly upon yourself (looking up to God the meanwhile), to see if the same sin exists not in yourself. "Search me, O God, and know my heart : try me, and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24).

In the third place, to enable you to do these things, ever keep near to Christ : for "without him you can do nothing" (John xv. 5). Set him always before you, and ever press after conformity to his image and likeness. He is the "vine, you are the branches." What can you then do without him ? He is "the head," you are his "members." How can you, therefore, live apart from him ? Nay, he is your life itself. "Because I live," says he, "ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). Ever, therefore, keep near to him, and live as in his presence. Do not think that religion consists in a mere form of doctrines. No ; it is something far more precious than this : it is a living, vital union and communion with a living, life-giving God. "I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. ii.

20). Heaven would be no heaven without Christ. "The worst things of Christ," says Rutherford, "his reproaches, his cross, are better than Egypt's treasures. He hath opened his door, and taken into his house—of—wine a poor sinner, and hath left me so sick of love for my Lord Jesus, that if heaven were at my disposing, I would give it for Christ, and would not be content to go to heaven, except I were persuaded that Christ were there."* Do you so live upon Christ, and do you so long after him ; and it will be well with thee.

In the fourth place, you must watch, strive, pray ; and, of course, diligently read, meditate, and pray over God's holy word. *Watch.* "Watch ye therefore," says the Lord, "for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning ; lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch" (Mark xiii. 35-37). "Be watchful," says he, "and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die ; for I have not found thy works perfect before God" (Rev. iii. 2). "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Pet. iv. 7).

Strive. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate : for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke xiii. 24). "Striving ac-

* Letter to Lady Hallhill. Bonar's edition of his Letters, p. 271.

cording to his working, which worketh in me mightily" (Col. i. 29). The religion of Christ appears a religion of paradoxes ; yet it is, in fact, in all its parts, perfectly harmonious and true. This is one of its seeming paradoxes. We are told in God's word that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom. ix. 16) ; and yet we are told again, "ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John v. 40). But both are equally true ; for if God be God, all things are dependant upon him, and he is sovereign, and must necessarily choose or elect. Again, if man be a responsible agent, as we are assured, and as we feel and know he is, then his damnation must be chargeable upon himself, as we are told it will be. This seeming paradox is harmonized in the following direction, "*work out* YOUR OWN SALVATION with fear and trembling, FOR IT IS GOD WHICH WORKETH IN YOU *both* TO WILL *and* TO DO OF HIS GOOD PLEASURE" (Phil. ii. 12, 13). Hence we are to strive with all our might, just as if everything depended upon ourselves ; and yet to rest implicitly upon God in Christ, just as if everything depended upon him. Duty is ours ; strength and help in duty, and success in duty is God's.

Pray. Prayer is not only essential to *progress*, but it is essential to *life*. There can be no life of God in the spirit, without prayer : for prayer is

the very breath of the new creature, and the oftener you breathe the breath of heaven, the more will you grow into the divine image and likeness—the more will you “be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Eph. iv. 23), “after the image of him that created” you (Col. iii. 10). “Evening, and morning, and at noon,” says David, “will I pray, and cry aloud : and he shall hear my voice” (Psa. lv. 17). “Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments” (Psa. cxix. 164). Christians do not, we hope, in general, neglect daily, morning, and evening prayer, but if you would be lively Christians you must pray much oftener than this. It is a good habit to pray at midday, as well as in the morning and evening ; but a better habit still is it to cultivate *a constant spirit of prayer*—a constant lifting up of the heart to God, at all times and in all seasons—a living, as it were, in God’s presence. The habit of ejaculatory prayer is one of immense importance to the soul. When the billows of temptation roll over you, it lifts your head above the waters, enables you to see where you are, and gives you strength to grasp the loving hand stretched down from above to rescue you. Ejaculatory prayer opens the door of the fortress, and strengthens you to enter from the host of foes, pressing on you from without. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower : the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Prov. xviii. 10). Earnest, heart-

felt, believing prayer, combined with active, strenuous effort, will accomplish anything. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).

You must likewise study God's holy word in the same spirit, ever looking up to God's holy Spirit, to open it out to you ; for without his aid you cannot understand it. You must meditate upon it, and endeavour above all things to render your life conformable to its requirements—"with open" or unveiled face "beholding" in this "glass the glory of the Lord," in order that you may be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). You would find it also a refreshment to you to commit portions of it to memory, and to repeat them to yourself at times when you cannot read or have access to the word itself. A light and power will sometimes come out from texts, meditated upon and repeated in this manner, that you would not otherwise have perceived. The above are a few brief hints as preservatives against apostasy. May the Lord make them useful to you. For the sake of conciseness, and in order that they may be the better remembered, we might abbreviate them thus:—Ever keep near to Christ—watch—strive—pray!

Lastly, remember that you are now "not your own," but that "you are bought with a price," and

are therefore bound to "glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). You are bound *to do*, and you are bound *to suffer*. You are bound to exhibit in yourselves the power of the religion of Christ, that others seeing you may "take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus" (Acts iv. 13). You are bound to glorify God, by your consistent walk and conversation. You are "a city set on an hill," and therefore you must not "be hid" (Matt. v. 14). "You are the salt of the earth," and therefore you have to season others, in order that they also may be preserved from corruption" (Matt. v. 13). You are to "let your light so shine before men," that, "others" seeing your "good works," may "glorify your father which is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16); "holding forth the word of life" (Phil. ii. 16) likewise, to those who are still wanderers from God, as you once were : according to that which is written, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. *And let him that heareth say, Come.* And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17). In fine, you have to get to heaven yourself, and you have to bring as many with you there also as you can.

But you have also *to suffer*. It is easier to do than to suffer, but you are bound to do both : "for even hereunto were ye called" (1 Pet. ii. 21). It is the badge of all Christ's people. Christ himself suffered : so must you. If therefore he permit yo

to be tempted of the devil, and harassed, so that your very soul seems set as a mark for his arrows, and you are filled with his "fiery darts" (Eph. vi. 16); aye, and that not for a day, or a week, or a month, or a year, but for many; you must bear it. If he make thy life bitter to thee on account of thy sin, so that thou loathe thyself, and wouldest at times almost wish thyself for a season in hell, if it were lawful, and thou couldest thereby have thy sin burnt out of thy being; thou must bear it. If he set thee as a "solitary in families" (Psa. lxxviii. 6), and "put thy brethren far from thee;" and "make thine acquaintance" to be "estranged from thee" (Job xix. 13), and cause the world to look coldly down upon thee, and to slight thee; "thou must bear it." If he "wound thee in the house of thy friends" (Zech. xiii. 6), and the dear ones of thine heart are severed from thee, and thy choice ones pine away and die before thine eyes, and thou be "left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city" (Isa. i. 8), with a withered, bleeding, stricken, desolate heart; thou must bear it. If he "lift thee up," but to "cast thee down" (Psa. xxx. 1, cii. 10), or "open the door" for thee (2 Cor. ii. 12), but to "shut thee up" again in "prison" (Psa. cxlii. 7), so that thou "can'st not come forth" (Psa. lxxxviii. 8); thou must bear it. If he "cut thee off with pining sickness, from day unto night, making an end of

thee" (Isa. xxxviii. 12), and thou draggest on a long, weary, painful existence ; thou must bear it. If he excite a desire in thine heart to glorify him by preaching his word to others, and yet give thee no opportunity to do so, and when thou hast relinquished all hope of being called to "serve him with your spirit in the gospel of his Son" (Rom. i. 9), the desire break out again in thine heart with tenfold energy, so that "his word in thine heart seem as a burning fire shut up in thy bones" (Jer. xx. 9) ; and yet he fix thee more firmly than ever where thou art ; thou must bear it. Nay, if he afflict thee, not with one only of these things, but with all of them, one after the other, temptation following temptation, sorrow following sorrow, pain following pain, trouble following trouble, grief following grief, until thou seem to be "afflicted with *all* his waves" (Psa. lxxxviii. 7) ; yet still thou must bear it. Of yourself you are indeed wholly insufficient for these things : "but your sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. iii. 5). And "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John iv. 4).

And think you, you will be called to endure these things in vain ? No !

Let his people courage take ;
 Bear with a submissive mind,
 All they suffer for his sake ;
Rich amends they soon will find.

This is your "*light affliction*, which is but for a moment," and which will "work for you *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*" (2 Cor. iv. 17). "Behold, *happy* is the man whom God *correcteth* : therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty" (Job v. 17) ; "Nor faint when thou art rebuked of him : for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons ; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not ? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence : shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live ? For they verily, for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure ; but he for our *profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness*" (Heb. xii. 5-10). Oh, when you cast off this your "vile body" (Phil. iii. 21), with all its sin and wretchedness, and are "clothed upon with your house, which is from heaven" (2 Cor. v. 2), "fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. iii. 21) ; and feel your dear Lord's own fair hand wiping away all tears from your eyes (Isa. xxv. 8, Rev. vii. 17) ; and hear him saying to you, in his own sweet accents, that "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the

former things are passed away" (Rev. xxi. 4) ; then you will not regret what you " did and suffered for him" on earth ; but feel shame, if the blessed can feel shame, that you had not done and suffered more. Courage, believer, courage : your dear Lord looketh down upon you. " Watch you, stand fast in the faith, quit you like a man, be strong " (1 Cor. xvi. 13). Hold out faith and patience, and all will be well : and " so an entrance shall be ministered unto you *abundantly* into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ " (2 Pet. i. 11). Amen.

THE END.

CORRIGENDA.

Page 54, lines 8, 9, *for* invested *read* infested

... 107, line 9 from bottom, *for* Vergirius *read* Vergerius

630030

PURITAN SEMINARY LIBRARY



3 2965 00133 1061